United Nations

S/PV.3757

Security Council

Fifty-second Year

Provisional

3757th Meeting

Thursday, 27 March 1997, 11.40 a.m.

New York

President:	Mr. Wlosowicz	(Poland)
Members:	Chile	Mr. Somavía
	China	Mr. Wang Xuexian
	Costa Rica	Mrs. Incera
	Egypt	Mr. Abdel Aziz
	France	Mr. Dejammet
	Guinea-Bissau	Mr. Da Gama
	Japan	Mr. Owada
	Kenya	Mr. Mahugu
	Portugal	Mr. Monteiro
	Republic of Korea	Mr. Choi
	Russian Federation	Mr. Lavrov
	Sweden	Mr. Osvald
	United Kingdom of Great Britain and Northern Ireland	Sir John Weston
	United States of America	Mr. Richardson

Agenda

The situation in Liberia

Twenty-second progress report of the Secretary-General on the United Nations Observer Mission in Liberia (S/1997/237)

97-85308 (E)

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The meeting was called to order at 11.40 a.m.

Adoption of the agenda

The agenda was adopted.

The situation in Liberia

Twenty-second progress report of the Secretary-General on the United Nations Observer Mission in Liberia (S/1997/237)

The President: I should like to inform the Council that I have received letters from the representatives of Liberia and the Netherlands, in which they request to be invited to participate in the discussion of the item on the Council's agenda. In conformity with the usual practice, I propose, with the consent of the Council, to invite those representatives to participate in the discussion, without the right to vote, in accordance with the relevant provisions of the Charter and rule 37 of the Council's provisional rules of procedure.

There being no objection, it is so decided.

At the invitation of the President, Mr. Bull (Liberia) took a seat at the Council table; Mr. Berteling (Netherlands) took the seat reserved for him at the side of the Council Chamber.

The President: The Security Council will now begin its consideration of the item on its agenda. The Council is meeting in accordance with the understanding reached in its prior consultations.

Members of the Council have before them the twenty-second progress report of the Secretary-General on the United Nations Observer Mission in Liberia, document S/1997/237.

Members of the Council also have before them document S/1997/254, which contains the text of a draft resolution prepared in the course of the Council's prior consultations.

The first speaker is the representative of Liberia, on whom I now call.

Mr. Bull (Liberia): A little over six years ago, this Council issued its first statement on the situation in Liberia. At that time, the Liberian delegation regretted that the Security Council had waited over a year to take action on an earlier request for United Nations intervention. That delay was due, in part, to the Charter's provision which bars involvement in the internal affairs of Member States. My delegation called for a review of that Charter provision so that the Organization could effectively respond to conflict situations which entailed the violation of fundamental human rights or required United Nations intervention on humanitarian grounds.

Today, thanks to the proactive role of the United Nations in conflict resolution, the Liberian conflict, and others like it, are receiving the deserved attention of this Organization.

The delegation of Liberia would like to thank the Secretary-General, His Excellency Mr. Kofi Annan, for his twenty-second progress report on the United Nations Observer Mission in Liberia, contained in document S/1997/237 of 19 March 1997. The Liberian Government and the Liberian people commend him for the dynamism he has brought to his new assignment and for his personal initiatives in support of the Liberian peace process. His convening, at United Nations Headquarters, on 20 February 1997, of the second Ministerial Meeting of the ad hoc Special Conference to Support the Peace Process in Liberia attests to his continuing commitment to peace in Liberia, for which we are profoundly grateful.

The report, one of the most important to come before this Council since the commencement of the civil crisis over seven years ago, offers hope for a new beginning — a rebirth of the Liberian nation. According to the report, in approximately 64 days from now, free and fair democratic elections are scheduled to be held in Liberia, to be followed 15 days later by the inauguration of a new Government. This significant achievement will bring to an end a very sad and painful chapter in the country's history.

On 26 July — approximately 120 days from now — Liberia will be observing its sesquicentenary as a free, sovereign and independent State. This is therefore a time of great promise for Liberia. It can truly be said that while Liberia is an old country — nearly 150 years old — the seed that will be sown on 30 May will hopefully lead to the building of a new nation after many decades of struggle to redress past injustices and to develop a national identity and universal recognition among Liberians of their common destiny.

This encouraging state of affairs is directly attributable to the States members of the Economic

Community of West African States (ECOWAS). Not only did their nationals shed their blood, but those States expended vast financial resources to help make peace in Liberia. It is due also to the United Nations, the Organization of African Unity and the widespread international support which now exists for the ECOWAS peace initiative. This pioneering effort by a subregion has made manifest Chapter VIII of the Charter and has demonstrated that, with the requisite political will, countries can act decisively in bringing some of the noble objectives of the Charter to fruition. To each of these States and organizations, we say thank you.

The Secretary-General's report outlines the assistance required from the international community in order to make the 30 May date for the holding of democratic elections a reality. First, resources must be provided for the deployment of three additional battalions to the ECOWAS Monitoring Group (ECOMOG). This would allow ECOMOG to be deployed throughout the country, which is a prerequisite to ensure freedom of movement, freedom of expression and voter participation free of intimidation. Secondly, the substantial number of eligible voters who are currently residing as refugees in neighbouring countries must be assisted to return home prior to the elections. Resources are required for their voluntary repatriation. Thirdly, ECOMOG requires additional technical support, especially medical supplies, spare parts and anti-riot equipment. Fourthly, assistance is required for the restructuring of the Liberian armed forces and paramilitary units in view of the intention of ECOWAS to withdraw its Monitoring Group from Liberia six months after the elections.

The Liberian delegation urgently appeals for these requirements to be met so that the peace process is not prevented from achieving its desired end: the restoration of democratic governance in Liberia.

The Council of State and its Chairperson, Mrs. Ruth Sando Perry, along with civil society, are fully committed to the restoration of peace and the rule of law in Liberia. Even though some outstanding issues, such as a reconstituted Elections Commission and Supreme Court, have not been fully resolved, they must not be viewed as insurmountable problems. The long-suffering Liberian people have sacrificed much to ensure the irreversibility of the peace process, and will not permit anything or anyone to perpetuate their suffering. However, they are also mindful that, in the final analysis, durable peace can be guaranteed only if the electoral process is credible and acceptable to the vast majority.

In this connection, the Secretary-General's basic framework for the holding of elections in Liberia — agreed to by the Liberian parties and the Economic Community of West African States — is the fundamental requirement for sustainable peace in Liberia. Its full implementation will allow the Liberian people to select their own leaders under conditions which must be declared by all, including the international community, as being free and fair. This is why the Liberian delegation fully supports the adoption of the draft resolution now before the Council and joins in the appeal to the international community to lend its unqualified support to the implementation of the electoral framework.

By the grace of the Almighty, when the Security Council reconvenes again, on or before 30 June 1997, to consider the mandate of the United Nations Observer Mission in Liberia (UNOMIL), it will be under happier circumstances, since a duly elected Government will have been installed in Liberia. All Liberians have this expectation, and the States members of the Economic Community of West African States, under the leadership of President Sani Abacha of the Federal Republic of Nigeria, as well as States Members of the United Nations, should also take particular pride, for their contributions and unflinching support will have ensured its realization.

At this time of great opportunity for peace and the rebirth of the Liberian nation, my delegation hopes that it can continue to count on the goodwill and support of all Members States of this Organization.

The President: The next speaker is the representative of the Netherlands. I invite him to take a seat at the Council table and to make his statement.

Mr. Berteling (Netherlands): I have the honour to speak on behalf of the European Union. The following associated countries — Bulgaria, the Czech Republic, Hungary, Latvia, Lithuania, Poland, Romania, Slovakia and Slovenia — align themselves with this statement. Norway also aligns itself with this statement.

Today the Council decides on what is hopefully the last extension of the mandate of the United Nations Observer Mission in Liberia (UNOMIL) before the elections in Liberia, and the European Union wishes, on this occasion, to highlight once again the importance we attach to a peaceful and democratic solution to the devastating conflict which has raged in Liberia for all too long now.

We wish to congratulate the Liberian people on the recent substantial progress made in the peace process. The security situation has improved and violence against civilians has decreased. Disarmament and demobilization are largely in compliance with the Abuja Agreement; civil society is being revitalized and political parties reactivated; most of the country can now be reached by the humanitarian-assistance agencies; cabinet meetings of the Liberian National Transitional Government have resumed; and a start is being made with reform of the police force. Although we are not blind to the dangers that could still threaten the process, we agree with the Secretary-General that

> "the prospects for peace ... now seem to be more promising than at any time since the start of the civil war". (S/1997/237, para. 64)

The European Union therefore fully supports the electoral process as defined by the Liberians and the Economic Community of West African States (ECOWAS) on the basis of the recommendations of the ECOWAS Committee of Nine. These recommendations were endorsed by the Chairman of ECOWAS and were supported by the second Ministerial Meeting of the ad hoc Special Conference to Support the Peace Process in Liberia, held here in New York on 20 February. We welcome the fact that the military component of UNOMIL has now finally reached its full, though small, authorized strength, and we support the Secretary-General's proposal that UNOMIL's electoral unit be strengthened. Every effort should be made to enable as many Liberian refugees as possible to be registered and to vote. The Union notes in this respect the need for voluntary repatriation in the shortest possible time.

Since the timetable for the elections is very tight, we look forward to the installation of the new independent Elections Commission on 2 April; we hope that the reconstituted Supreme Court will follow suit soon thereafter. At this critical juncture, strict adherence to the agreed timetable — the enactment of the electoral law and regulations by the end of March, voter registration in April, and the election campaign in May — is of the utmost importance. Provided the timetable is respected, the European Union confirms its willingness to provide financial and technical assistance to the electoral process. With European funding, a study has already been carried out on the preparations for the elections. The European Union also intends to send a team of election observers to Liberia.

In only two months' time the people of Liberia will vote to freely elect their President and Parliament. Last April, we did not dare dream that today there would be a realistic prospect that elections could take place so soon. Liberia and the international community owe this in no small measure to the unabated efforts of ECOWAS and its successive Chairmen, to the ECOWAS Monitoring Group (ECOMOG) and its Force Commander, to UNOMIL and to the Special Representative of the Secretary-General. United Nations agencies as well as non-governmental organizations have kept Liberians and their hopes alive during their ordeal. European Union member States have made substantial financial contributions to the peace process. The increased strength of ECOMOG will enable it to play a crucial role in providing a secure environment for the elections. Clear understandings between UNOMIL and ECOWAS are called for in this regard. Important European contributions have also been given for the reintegration of soldiers in civil society following their demobilization. In this regard we would like to stress the importance of immediate arrangements for child soldiers to return to their families and to be reintegrated into society. Bridging programmes have gained momentum, but should be stepped up further.

We must all work to the best of our abilities to make the peace process the decisive success we have been pursuing for several years now. But it is the Liberian people themselves who bear the ultimate responsibility for success or failure. We therefore urge all Liberians, and specifically their leaders, to cooperate with the elections and the peace process as a whole, to respect human rights, to facilitate humanitarian assistance and to seek further disarmament and genuine reconciliation.

The President: It is my understanding that the Council is ready to proceed to the vote on the draft resolution before it. Unless I hear any objection, I shall put the draft resolution to the vote.

There being no objection, it is so decided.

I shall first call on those members of the Council who wish to make statements before the voting.

Mr. Dejammet (France)(*interpretation from French*): France will vote in favour of the draft resolution before the Council. This text seeks to extend, we hope for the last time, the mandate of the United Nations Observer Mission in Liberia (UNOMIL) until 30 June 1997.

Much progress has been made since 6 April 1996. Almost a year ago, after the looting in Monrovia, the situation seemed desperate. Following those tragic events, a new agreement was signed at Abuja on 17 August, and on the basis of that agreement, the disarmament of factions, a highly necessary phase, began on 22 November. That process was successfully completed on 9 February. The next stage will be the holding of elections on 30 May, which will lead up to the installation of a new Government on 15 June. When the UNOMIL mandate expires, the entirety of the peace agreement signed by the factions should in principle have been implemented.

We owe these positive results to the tireless efforts of the countries members of the Economic Community of West African States (ECOWAS), but also to the excellent work accomplished on the ground by the African monitoring force. We also commend the devotion with which the Special Representative of the Secretary-General has carried out his mission. All these efforts have improved security in the country, which is an essential condition for the restoration of the confidence and for the completion of the peace process.

The elections, which as I noted earlier constitute the next stage, appear for the first time to be an achievable objective. The ECOWAS Committee of Nine met at Monrovia on 13 and 14 February 1997 to establish an electoral framework with the Council of State. We hope that this process will be scrupulously respected.

However, the timetable for the elections could be extremely tight, as is rightly noted by the Secretary-General. For that reason, we note with concern that the independent Elections Commission has not managed to nominate its chairman as planned.We hope that this difficulty will be overcome by 2 April so that the electoral law can be promulgated on time. Then, names will have to be placed on the electoral rolls during April and the electoral campaign organized in May.

All Liberians, leaders of former factions in particular, must make the necessary efforts to make the elections fair and equitable. For our part, we are prepared to support the role that the United Nations intends to play in the conduct of the election. That is why we are pleased that the draft resolution endorses the Secretary-General's recommendations concerning the tasks to be entrusted to UNOMIL on that occasion.

Naturally, we know that the restoration of democracy in Liberia will merely be a stage on the way to stability. The programmes for demobilizing ex-combatants, for the return of refugees unable to return before the elections and the reintegration of those refugees into the economic life of the country are, we feel, equally essential tasks. France, within the framework of the European Union, is helping to mobilize substantial resources to address these difficulties. We hope that these efforts will not be in vain.

Mr. Abdel Aziz (Egypt)(*interpretation from Arabic*): The Council is discussing the question of Liberia. This is in line with the hopes raised at the last ministerial meeting of the Economic Community of West African States (ECOWAS) Committee of Nine, held at Monrovia on 13 and 14 February, that the Liberian factions would meet their commitments under the Abuja Agreement on a peaceful settlement in Liberia and that they will give priority to national considerations and to the national interest of the Liberian people.

The most recent report of the Secretary-General includes positive observations; the military component of the Economic Community of West African States (ECOWAS) Monitoring Group (ECOMOG) has been supplemented with new forces from Mali and Ghana; the disarmament of factions continues; ECOMOG intends to continue its serious searches for arms that remain in the hands of the factions and to confiscate them; and ECOWAS is cooperating with the United Nations in establishing the framework for the Liberian elections to take place on 30 May, which will include the revitalization of the political parties. On that last point, we welcome another positive step: the understanding that has been reached between the United Nations and ECOWAS on United Nations assistance in the electoral process. We fully support the Secretary-General's recommendation on the means to increase the size and broaden the role of UNOMIL.

Over the past six years, the ECOWAS countries have made great efforts which deserve encouragement and support. Their latest decision to increase the size and effectiveness of ECOMOG, despite the difficult economic conditions of those countries, is clear evidence of their determination to go forward to achieve peace in Liberia. It is also proof that regional arrangements have been sufficient to play an important role. However, for ECOWAS to undertake that role, Liberia and ECOWAS need the support of the international community. In that respect, we thank the countries that have lent financial and technical assistance to ECOMOG and to the United Nations Trust Fund for Liberia. We hope that this

assistance will continue so that ECOWAS and ECOMOG can fully carry out their functions.

The Egyptian delegations supports the draft resolution before the Council, which would extend UNOMIL's mandate for three months, to the end of June. We will vote in favour of the draft resolution. We are convinced that the settlement process in Liberia has reached a turning point. We hope that the elections will take place on 30 May, as planned. We hope that the Liberian leaders will cooperate in making the necessary preparations, including the installation of the independent Elections Commission, following the successful example of Sierra Leone.

A long road will lie before Liberia even after the holding of elections. There are difficult tasks ahead; to absorb 800,000 refugees who are dispersed in neighbouring countries; to reintegrate demobilized combatants into civil society; to build State institutions and infrastructure destroyed by the war, including the Supreme Court; and other tasks. The international community, which stood by Liberia during its wartime difficulties, will certainly support it during peacetime so that Liberia will be able to restore its regional and international position.

Mr. Wang (China)(*interpretation from Chinese*): The Chinese delegation will vote in favour of the draft resolution before the Council. We are in favour of the Secretary-General's recommendation to extend the mandate of the United Nations Observer Mission in Liberia (UNOMIL) for three months. We also are in favour of an even more positive United Nations role in Liberia in support of the peace process, and support the unremitting efforts made by the Economic Community of West African States (ECOWAS) to resolve the question of Liberia.

We are encouraged by the major progress recently achieved in the Liberian peace process. The disarmament and demobilization of ex-combatants of the various Liberian factions are key elements in the peace process, and an important prerequisite for the smooth holding of general elections in Liberia. We appreciate the recent political good faith and positive actions on the part of the various factions in Liberia.

As the Permanent Representative of Liberia stated, the ultimate settlement of the question of Liberia rests solely with the Liberian people themselves. This calls for a strong sense of political responsibility on the part of the leaders of Liberia's various factions in conformity with the interests of their country and their people.

The peace process in Liberia has entered its last important phase. We hope that the various Liberian parties will continue their efforts and expedite the completion of all the tasks in the military areas as stipulated in the Abuja Agreement and that they will hold sincere consultations and solve the differences still remaining in the preparatory work for the elections, so that these elections can be held as scheduled on 30 May 1997.

The general elections to be held in Liberia will be an important milestone in the Liberian peace process, as well as in the history of Liberia. The international community, including the United Nations, is duty-bound to actively support this election. We are in favour of shifting the focus of UNOMIL to electoral assistance. We therefore appeal to all sides to assist the elections in Liberian with human, material and financial resources.

No step or accomplishment achieved in the Liberian peace process would have been possible without the strenuous efforts made by ECOWAS. Over the years, ECOWAS countries have overcome their own financial difficulties and, in spite of adversity and setbacks, have made active good-offices and mediation efforts. They have sent peacekeeping troops to Liberia and have helped that country to move from war to peace.

China has always firmly supported the efforts made by ECOWAS in accordance with the United Nations Charter for the solution of questions in the region. We believe that the international community should provide political and financial help to ECOWAS and the ECOWAS Monitoring Group (ECOMOG). Especially now that the peace process in Liberia is at a critical juncture, ECOMOG's ability to assist should be strengthened so that it can carry out its peacekeeping mandate smoothly and help all parties in Liberia to complete the peace process.

Liberia, which has experienced seven years of civil war, will soon achieve peace. This will be a happy event for the people of Liberia, as well as for all the people of Africa. China extends its sincere good wishes to the Liberian people. Together with the rest of the international community, we will continue to make our contribution so that Liberia can achieve peace and stability and enter a new era of rehabilitation and development as soon as possible.

Mr. Monteiro (Portugal): The representative of the presidency of the European Union has just expressed our

common vision of the Liberian peace process and our support for the draft resolution before the Security Council. Portugal notes with deep satisfaction the recent progress made towards the consolidation of peace and national reconciliation in Liberia. We particulary welcome the significant progress in the political and military situation, as described in the report of the Secretary-General dated 19 March 1997.

We hope that the present extension of the mandate of the United Nations Observer Mission in Liberia (UNOMIL) and the Mission's new and important role in the electoral process will constitute positive contributions towards the holding of free and fair elections in that country.

My delegation strongly believes that the maintenance and strengthening of UNOMIL's presence are essential to this phase of the peace process, as underlined in the report of the Secretary-General. In this context, enhanced cooperation between UNOMIL and the Economic Community of West African States (ECOWAS) Monitoring Group (ECOMOG) will be an essential element in the success of the peace process.

Let me also welcome the agreement between the Council of State and the Economic Community of West African States on a basic framework for the holding of elections in Liberia. We call on both the Liberian Council of State and ECOWAS member States to work jointly, with renewed energy, towards the full implementation of that agreement.

The peace process is now entering a new and crucial phase. Timely conclusion of this phase is essential both to the credibility of the peace process and to the viability of the coming elections. We support the efforts of ECOWAS, and we very much hope that all the parties will abide by the timetable established in the Abuja Agreement. I also underline the importance we attach to the establishment of electoral law and regulations by the end of this March, to the registration of voters in April and to the election campaign in May.

Like other delegations, we very much favour the strengthening of ECOMOG, and we also would like to pay tribute to the very important role of ECOMOG's Force Commander in the area of the demobilization of the ex-combatants of all Liberian factions.

Organizing elections is not an easy task, especially in countries which have experienced civil war. Several requirements must be met in order to organize free, fair and internationally verifiable elections in Liberia. I would just like to mention several items deserving of careful consideration at this essential stage of the preparations: the urgent installation of the independent Electoral Commission and the reconstituted Supreme Court; the registration of voters; and the return of refugees — and I would like to stress that this is indispensable for the credibility of the entire electoral process. The possibility of non-participation by almost 30 per cent of the Liberian population in the elections should be a matter of great concern for the international community.

As we have stated on other occasions, we strongly believe that the primary responsibility for peace and national reconciliation in Liberia rests with all Liberian parties. We urge all Liberians to cooperate fully with the peace process, in order to consolidate national reconciliation and to move the disarmament process forward. We also urge all Liberian leaders to create conditions of security for everybody. Their commitment to respect human rights in the country and their facilitation of humanitarian activities are of particular importance.

The United Nations and regional organizations must continue to play an important role in Liberia. However, the role of those organizations cannot be confined to the strict implementation of the military and political aspects of the peace agreement. They should help and promote all efforts to alleviate the present difficulties that the Liberian people are facing.

In conclusion, I would like to echo the appeal to the international community to support actively not only the economic and social reconstruction of Liberia but also Liberian institutions directly involved in the preservation of law and order.

The draft resolution before us is a step in the right direction.

Mr. Osvald (Sweden): I would first like to say that we fully share the views expressed by the Netherlands on behalf of the European Union a few minutes ago on the situation in Liberia.

Sweden welcomes the progress made in the peace process in Liberia. It is especially encouraging that the security situation in the country has improved and that there have been significant achievements in the demobilization process.

The forthcoming elections will be an important step towards democracy in Liberia. In this context, Sweden welcomes the recommendations on a basic framework for the elections, as endorsed by the Chairman of the Economic Community of West African States (ECOWAS). The timetable for the elections is, however, extremely tight. It is imperative that the parties do their utmost to facilitate its implementation.

It is important that the large number of Liberian refugees be given the opportunity to cast their votes. The prompt voluntary repatriation of refugees is therefore essential.

The ECOWAS Monitoring Group (ECOMOG) has played an important role in the Liberian peace process and will continue to do so. ECOMOG will also play an important role in the electoral process in ensuring the security and protection of international personnel. In this context too, we welcome the cooperation between ECOMOG and UNOMIL.

Sweden believes that a prolongation of the mandate of UNOMIL and an extension of its tasks in line with the recommendations of the Secretary-General will promote the process of peace and democracy in Liberia. We will therefore vote in favour of the draft resolution now before us.

Mr. Somavía (Chile) (*interpretation from Spanish*): I would like to welcome to the Security Council Ambassador Bull of Liberia, who is here under circumstances that are much more positive than those that existed in the past.

After much tragedy in its terrible history of the past seven years this is a time of hope for Liberia. The peace process is entering its final stage with the beginning of the electoral process. As we have been told by the Secretary-General, certain very positive factors are currently emerging in Liberia that were unimaginable only months ago, which gives us serious hope that Liberia can embark on a peaceful electoral process in an acceptable security situation.

I wish to mention some of those factors. In the past we have described in great detail the problems that Liberia has confronted. I therefore really do not want to miss this opportunity to highlight the good things that are happening. Relative peace has continued to prevail throughout the country. There have been noteworthy achievements in the disarmament process. The personnel of the Economic Community of West African States (ECOWAS) Monitoring Group (ECOMOG) will soon be deployed in the two counties in which they are not yet deployed. The civilian population is gradually gaining confidence. A revitalization of civil society and of the political parties is taking place. The human rights community continues to gain strength and to make its presence felt in the country's political and social spheres. The humanitarian community continues to broaden its operations in the interior of Liberia and is increasing its access to the population in those regions.

These facts are quite indicative of the fact that the Liberian crisis is beginning to be resolved in a positive way. In other words, the prevailing conditions in Liberia could provide a reasonable basis for organizing and holding the elections which are planned for 30 May. This, as we were told by the representative of Liberia in his statement, is a possible basis for the rebirth of the Liberian nation.

In spite of all this, there are a few matters which concern us and of which the international community will have to be watchful. First, one third of the combatants have yet to be disarmed. This is a disquieting factor and one which we hope will not have a negative impact on the process.

Secondly, the time remaining before the elections is undoubtedly extremely short. Moreover, there is a delay in the formation of the new independent Election Commission and the re-established Supreme Court. It is legitimate to wonder whether there will be sufficient time for the elections to be held on the scheduled date. Nonetheless, it is extraordinarily important that those elections be held as scheduled.

We have recently received more good news. The Force Commander of ECOMOG has reported that the territory of Liberia has been cleansed of landmines. This will make it possible for people to move about the country without the fear of mines in their path. This should facilitate the return of refugees who want to participate in the electoral process. However, I also believe that from the perspective of the international community — which has attached so much importance to reducing the impact of anti-personnel mines — this is an example of how problems of this nature can be resolved when the resources to do so exist.

Lastly, I would like to thank and congratulate the Secretary-General, his Special Representative, and the personnel of UNOMIL, ECOWAS and ECOMOG for the role they have played and continue to play in Liberia. A

few months ago, in 1996, we were witnessing a situation in that country which seemed impossible to resolve. However, we now see that the Liberians have gotten down to serious work for their future. We wish them every success, and congratulate them on what they are doing.

In this framework, we must therefore begin the transition towards the point when Liberia can stabilize the political and security situation with a Government that enjoys internal and external legitimacy. This means that the United Nations system, the Bretton Woods institutions and the donor countries must give high priority to Liberia in order to promote the economic and social development of the country.

As for the Security Council, we must ensure a fluid link between the responsibilities of the Council — which, if everything continues as we are now seeing in Liberia, will come to an end in the near future — and the transition towards support for cooperation for development, which, in the final analysis, is the only stable source of peace, as it reduces poverty, generates employment and brings about reconciliation after such a terrible conflict. It is our responsibility to ensure that link between the peace and security stage and the stage of furthering development.

For all the reasons we have described, my delegation will vote in favour of the draft resolution before the Council, which will extend the mandate of UNOMIL to 30 June 1997.

We would once again like to congratulate all those who have made this process possible, in particular the leaders and the people of Liberia, on the present state of affairs.

Mr. Owada (Japan): The recent history of Liberia can only be described as tragic. After seven years of civil war the national infrastructure is in ruins and the very fabric of society has disintegrated. It is therefore gratifying to note that since January this year there have been signs that the situation in Liberia is beginning to stabilize. There have been no reports of cease-fire violations in more than two months now and some improvements are discernible in the humanitarian situation. The recent seizure of a stockpile of weapons at the residence of a retiring member of the Council of State, however, is a clear signal that the situation in Liberia is still fraught with danger.

Vigilance on the part of the international community is particularly necessary at this time when preparations are under way for the elections that are scheduled to be held on 30 May. The time-table for holding the elections is extremely tight. It is essential for the Liberian parties to redouble their efforts to ensure that free and fair elections are held as scheduled as an essential phase of the peace process in Liberia. The elections, if held on time and in a free and fair manner, will provide the first opportunity for the people of Liberia to express their views as to how and by whom they wish to be governed, and thus consolidate the ground for the establishment of a stable foundation for national reconciliation.

The validity of any elections is enhanced when they gain the fullest possible participation of the electorate. The elections in Liberia are no exception. Their legitimacy would be greatly enhanced by the participation of those citizens who return from their place of refuge in neighbouring countries. Therefore, it will be particularly important for the situation on the ground to improve and for the refugees to feel secure enough to return voluntarily. This is important not only from the humanitarian point of view, but also in terms of consolidating the electoral process through enhanced legitimacy.

Let me emphasize in this context the importance of the continued presence of the Economic Community of West African States (ECOWAS) Monitoring Group (ECOMOG) in maintaining a secure environment in Liberia. Japan recognizes that the United Nations Observer Mission in Liberia (UNOMIL), which is working closely with ECOMOG, is also playing an essential role in the peace process, and believes that it can expand its role to include the electoral process. My delegation therefore welcomes the extension of UNOMIL's mandate for an additional three months, until 30 June.

There is no doubt that the holding of free and fair elections will be a milestone in the peace process. But the elections are just a beginning, and the road ahead to true and lasting peace will be an arduous one. The wounds inflicted by the extended civil war are deep and not easily healed, and the very socio-economic fabric of Liberia as a nation must be restored. Achieving national reconciliation and consolidating a framework for a true political settlement are but two of the difficult tasks that lie ahead.

As has been pointed out, the responsibility for accomplishing these tasks lies chiefly with the Liberian people themselves. But while the Liberian people must take the lead, the international community, for its part,

should be ready to follow with assistance. I wish, on behalf of my Government, to pledge that Japan is prepared to play a meaningful role in such assistance efforts. In fact, Japan has already been extending electoral assistance through a contribution to the United Nations Trust Fund for Liberia. As preparations for the elections proceed, Japan will further consider a wide range of assistance to the people of Liberia, including the possibility of funding the purchase of elections-related equipment and of dispatching personnel to serve as electoral observers. The international community has to be prepared to make every effort to ensure that the ongoing peace process, which has been showing encouraging signs of progress in recent weeks, may be successfully concluded.

Mr. Richardson (United States of America): Liberia has taken important steps forward in this mandate in the political and security fields. Most importantly, there is a real possibility of elections in an environment relatively free of fighting and intimidation. Progress on disarmament has taken place, and the Economic Community of West African States (ECOWAS) Monitoring Group (ECOMOG) has deployed in nearly every part of the country. Under Operation Assured Lift, the United States Air Force transported an additional 1,200 West African peacekeepers to Liberia, which helped ECOMOG expand its presence as election preparations get under way.

But risks to peace remain, and we must continue to be vigilant. Large numbers of fighters have not disarmed, and the factions, although formally non-existent after 31 January, have not fully disbanded their command and control structures. ECOMOG continues to discover weapons in various parts of the country, even in Monrovia. The stakes in this election are high, and the threat of violence has not disappeared. We appeal to the former faction leaders and their fighters to complete disarmament by turning in to ECOMOG all remaining weapons.

The Liberian people deserve the best election possible, and the United States is concerned at the delays in inaugurating the independent Elections Commission. As each day passes, the 30 May deadline becomes more challenging, given the considerable logistical work that free and fair elections require. We hope that the Elections Commission and the Supreme Court will be installed and will start to function without further delay.

We are also very concerned that a level playing field be created for all candidates to compete openly and for all citizens to vote freely in the elections. We would like to see equal access by the various political parties to the media, particularly radio, to enable them to share their views with as many people as possible. The Secretary-General's report notes the importance of radio communication for voter education, and we look forward to further details on United Nations plans for radio programming.

The United States supports the fullest possible voluntary participation by all Liberians in the election process. The Liberian Government and electoral authorities, and Member States in which Liberian refugees are located, should make every effort to achieve that objective.

In voting for today's draft resolution, the United States supports the extension of the United Nations Observer Mission in Liberia (UNOMIL) through June to enable UNOMIL to assist with preparations for and observation of these elections. We welcome the Secretariat's assurance to the Council that the new electoral activities can be carried out within UNOMIL's existing resources. We commend all those who have offered financial contributions and other support to Liberia's elections. The voluntary contributions for the elections should be fully utilized before election activities are funded out of the UNOMIL budget. Once the elections have concluded, including a run-off if necessary, the role for the military observers should be completed and UNOMIL should begin the drawdown of its operation. We would like to see some of UNOMIL's activities, particularly the monitoring of human rights, continue as programs under the appropriate United Nations agencies after UNOMIL formally concludes as a mission.

Liberia and the international community look towards elections in the hope that the long, devastating cycle of destruction has ended. UNOMIL, in conjunction with ECOMOG, has contributed greatly to the peace process as it has moved farther ahead than at any time in the past. ECOMOG's role in providing security is of primary importance and continues to be essential for the final stretch in the difficult run-up to elections.

The people of Liberia will soon demonstrate that they can peacefully elect new leaders for the future. We wish them, in collaboration with ECOWAS, the Organization of African Unity, the United Nations and their international friends, the greatest possible success in this democratic endeavour.

The President: It is my understanding that the Security Council is ready to proceed to the vote on the

draft resolution (S/1997/254) before it. If I hear no objection, I shall put the draft resolution to the vote now.

There being no objection, it is so decided.

A vote was taken by show of hands.

In favour:

Chile, China, Costa Rica, Egypt, France, Guinea-Bissau, Japan, Kenya, Poland, Portugal, Republic of Korea, Russian Federation, Sweden, United Kingdom of Great Britain and Northern Ireland, United States of America

The President: There were 15 votes in favour. The draft resolution has been adopted unanimously as resolution 1100 (1997).

There are no further speakers on my list. The Security Council has thus concluded the present stage of its consideration of the item on its agenda. The Security Council will remain seized of the matter.

The meeting rose at 12.40 p.m.

United Nations S/PV.3758

Security Council
Fifty-second Year

Provisional

3758th Meeting
Friday, 28 March 1997, 8.40 p.m.
New York

President:	Mr. Wlosowicz	(Poland)
Members:	Chile	Mr. Somavía
	China	Mr. Qin Huasun
	Costa Rica	Mr. Berrocal Soto
	Egypt	Mr. Abdel Aziz
	France	Mr. Dejammet
	Guinea-Bissau	Mr. Da Gama
	Japan	Mr. Konishi
	Kenya	Mr. Mahugu
	Portugal	Mr. Monteiro
	Republic of Korea	Mr. Park
	Russian Federation	Mr. Lavrov
	Sweden	Mr. Osvald
	United Kingdom of Great Britain and Northern Ireland	Sir John Weston
	United States of America	Mr. Gnehm

Agenda

The situation in Albania

Letter dated 28 March 1997 from the Permanent Representative of Albania to the United Nations addressed to the President of the Security Council (S/1997/259)

97-85321 (E)

This record contains the original text of speeches delivered in English and interpretations of speeches delivered in the other languages. The final text will be printed in the *Official Records of the Security Council*. Corrections should be submitted to original speeches only. They should be incorporated in a copy of the record and be sent under the signature of a member of the delegation concerned, *within one week of the date of publication*, to the Chief of the Verbatim Reporting Service, room C-178.

The meeting was called to order at 8.45 p.m.

Adoption of the agenda

The agenda was adopted.

The situation in Albania

Letter dated 28 March 1997 from the Permanent Representative of Albania to the United Nations addressed to the President of the Security Council (S/1997/259)

The President: I should like to inform the Council that I have received letters from the representatives of Albania, Austria, Belgium, Denmark, Finland, Germany, Greece, Ireland, Italy, the Netherlands, Romania, Spain, the former Yugoslav Republic of Macedonia and Turkey, in which they request to be invited to participate in the discussion of the item on the Council's agenda. In conformity with the usual practice, I propose, with the consent of the Council, to invite those representatives to participate in the discussion, without the right to vote, in accordance with the relevant provisions of the Charter and rule 37 of the Council's provisional rules of procedure.

There being no objection, it is so decided.

At the invitation of the President, Mr. Kulla (Albania) took a seat at the Council table; Mr. Sucharipa (Austria), Mr. Reyn (Belgium), Mr. Kimberg (Denmark), Mr. Orpana (Finland), Mr. Eitel (Germany), Mr. Sarris (Greece), Mr. Hoey (Ireland), Mr. Fulci (Italy), Mr. Berteling (Netherlands), Mr. Gorita (Romania), Mr. Laclaustra (Spain), Mr. Čalovski (the former Yugoslav Republic of Macedonia) and Mr. Çelem (Turkey) took the seats reserved for them at the side of the Council Chamber.

The President: The Security Council will now begin its consideration of the item on its agenda. The Council is meeting in accordance with the understanding reached in its prior consultations.

Members of the Council have before them the letter dated 28 March 1997 from the Permanent Representative of Albania to the United Nations addressed to the President of the Security Council, document S/1997/259.

Members of the Council also have before them document S/1997/260, which contains the text of a draft resolution submitted by Albania, Austria, Belgium, France, Greece, Italy, Poland, Portugal, the Republic of Korea, Romania, Spain, Sweden, the former Yugoslav Republic of Macedonia, Turkey, the United Kingdom of Great Britain and Northern Ireland and the United States of America. Denmark, Finland, Germany, Ireland and the Netherlands have joined as sponsors of the draft resolution.

I should like to draw the attention of the members of the Council to the following revisions to be made to the text of the draft resolution contained in document S/1997/260 in its provisional form.

The last part of the seventh preambular paragraph should read:

"in particular those of the OSCE and of the European Union";

and the last part of operative paragraph 4 should read:

"further authorizes these Member States to ensure the security and freedom of movement of the personnel of the said multinational protection force".

I should like to draw the attention of the members of the Council to the following documents: S/1997/226 and S/1997/230, letters dated 17 and 14 March 1997 from the Permanent Representative of the Netherlands to the United Nations addressed to the Secretary-General, and S/1997/251, letter dated 24 March 1997 from the Chargé d'affaires *ad interim* of the Permanent Mission of the Netherlands to the United Nations addressed to the Secretary-General; and S/1997/258, letter dated 27 March 1997 from the Permanent Representative of Italy to the United Nations addressed to the Secretary-General.

It is my understanding that the Council is ready to proceed to vote on the draft resolution before it, as orally revised in its provisional form. Unless I hear any objection, I shall put the draft resolution to the vote now.

There being no objection, it is so decided.

I shall first call on those members of the Council who wish to make statements before the voting.

Mr. Qin Huasun (China) (*interpretation from Chinese*): The Chinese delegation is concerned about developments in Albania and hopes that tranquillity and stability will be restored in Albania as soon as possible.

We therefore support the political and diplomatic efforts made by the international community towards the settlement of the Albanian question.

The question of Albania is a complex one. In essence, it is the internal affair of Albania. For the Security Council to authorize action in a country because of strife resulting from the internal affairs of that country is inconsistent with the provisions of the United Nations Charter. This matter should therefore be handled with extreme caution. Moreover, we have never been in favour of the Security Council frequently invoking Chapter VII of the Charter in authorizing such actions.

At the same time, however, with due regard for the relevant requests of the Albanian Government and for its urgent desire for the return of stability to Albania as soon as possible, the Chinese delegation will not stand in the way of the adoption of the draft resolution.

In our view, the ultimate settlement of the Albanian question depends on the Albanian people themselves. We look forward to the restoration of stability and calm to Albania at the earliest date.

The President: I now put to the vote the draft resolution contained in document S/1997/260, as orally revised in its provisional form.

A vote was taken by show of hands.

In favour:

Chile, Costa Rica, Egypt, France, Guinea-Bissau, Japan, Kenya, Poland, Portugal, Republic of Korea, Russian Federation, Sweden, United Kingdom of Great Britain and Northern Ireland, United States of America

Against:

None

Abstaining:

China

The President: The result of the voting is as follows: 14 votes in favour, none against and 1 abstaining. The draft resolution, as orally revised in its provisional form, has been adopted as resolution 1101 (1997).

There are no further speakers on my list. The Security Council has thus concluded the present stage of its consideration of the item on the agenda.

Before adjourning the meeting, I would like to thank all present here tonight — members of the Security Council, other Members of the United Nations, and members of the Secretariat — for their commitment and their patience. I hope they will all have a well-deserved peaceful weekend.

The meeting rose at 8.55 p.m.

United Nations S/PV.3759

Security Council

Fifty-second Year

Provisional

3759th Meeting

Monday, 31 March 1997, 6 p.m.

New York

President:	Mr. Wlosowicz	(Poland)
Members:	Chile	Mr. Larraín
	China	Mr. Qin Huasun
	Costa Rica	Mr. Sáenz
	Egypt	Mr. Abdel Aziz
	France	Mr. Dejammet
	Guinea-Bissau	Mr. Cabral
	Japan	Mr. Owada
	Kenya	Mr. Mahugu
	Portugal	Mr. Monteiro
	Republic of Korea	Mr. Park
	Russian Federation	Mr. Lavrov
	Sweden	Mr. Osvald
	United Kingdom of Great Britain and Northern Ireland	Sir John Weston
	United States of America	Mr. Inderfurth

Agenda

The situation in Angola

Report of the Secretary-General on the United Nations Angola Verification Mission (UNAVEM III) (S/1997/248)

97-85327 (E)

This record contains the original text of speeches delivered in English and interpretations of speeches delivered in the other languages. The final text will be printed in the *Official Records of the Security Council*. Corrections should be submitted to original speeches only. They should be incorporated in a copy of the record and be sent under the signature of a member of the delegation concerned, *within one week of the date of publication*, to the Chief of the Verbatim Reporting Service, room C-178.

The meeting was called to order at 6.15 p.m.

Adoption of the agenda

The agenda was adopted.

The situation in Angola

Report of the Secretary-General on the United Nations Angola Verification Mission (UNAVEM III) (S/1997/248)

The President: I should like to inform the Council that I have received a letter from the representative of Angola, in which she requests to be invited to participate in the discussion of the item on the Council's agenda. In conformity with the usual practice, I propose, with the consent of the Council, to invite that representative to participate in the discussion, without the right to vote, in accordance with the relevant provisions of the Charter and rule 37 of the Council's provisional rules of procedure.

There being no objection, it is so decided.

At the invitation of the President, Ms. Coelho Da Cruz (Angola) took a seat at the Council table.

The President: The Security Council will now begin its consideration of the item on its agenda. The Security Council is meeting in accordance with the understanding reached in its prior consultations.

Members of the Council have before them the report of the Secretary-General on the United Nations Angola Verification Mission (UNAVEM III), document S/1997/248.

Members of the Council also have before them document S/1997/262, which contains the text of a draft resolution prepared in the course of the Council's prior consultations.

It is my understanding that the Council is ready to proceed to the vote on the draft resolution (S/1997/262) before it. If I hear no objection, I shall put the draft resolution to the vote now.

There being no objection, it is so decided.

A vote was taken by show of hands.

In favour:

Chile, China, Costa Rica, Egypt, France, Guinea-Bissau, Japan, Kenya, Poland, Portugal, Republic of Korea, Russian Federation, Sweden, United Kingdom of Great Britain and Northern Ireland, United States of America

The President: There were 15 votes in favour. The draft resolution has been adopted unanimously as resolution 1102 (1997).

The Security Council has thus concluded the present stage of its consideration of the item on its agenda. The Security Council will remain seized of the matter.

The meeting rose at 6.20 p.m.

United Nations S/PV.3760

Security Council
Fifty-second Year

Provisional

3760th Meeting
Monday, 31 March 1997, 6.20 p.m.
New York

President:	Mr. Wlosowicz	(Poland)
Members:	Chile	Mr. Larraín
	China	Mr. Qin Huasun
	Costa Rica	Mr. Sáenz
	Egypt	Mr. Abdel Aziz
	France	Mr. Dejammet
	Guinea-Bissau	Mr. Cabral
	Japan	Mr. Owada
	Kenya	Mr. Mahugu
	Portugal	Mr. Monteiro
	Republic of Korea	Mr. Park
	Russian Federation	Mr. Lavrov
	Sweden	Mr. Osvald
	United Kingdom of Great Britain and Northern Ireland	Sir John Weston
	United States of America	Mr. Inderfurth

Agenda

The situation in Bosnia and Herzegovina

Report of the Secretary-General pursuant to Security Council resolution 1088 (1996) (S/1997/224 and Add.1)

97-85333 (E)

This record contains the original text of speeches delivered in English and interpretations of speeches delivered in the other languages. The final text will be printed in the *Official Records of the Security Council*. Corrections should be submitted to original speeches only. They should be incorporated in a copy of the record and be sent under the signature of a member of the delegation concerned, *within one week of the date of publication*, to the Chief of the Verbatim Reporting Service, room C-178.

The meeting was called to order at 6.20 p.m.

Adoption of the agenda

The agenda was adopted.

The situation in Bosnia and Herzegovina

Report of the Secretary-General pursuant to Security Council resolution 1088 (1996) (S/1997/224 and Add.1)

The President: I should like to inform the Council that I have received a letter from the representative of Bosnia and Herzegovina in which he requests to be invited to participate in the discussion of the item on the Council's agenda. In conformity with the usual practice, I propose, with the consent of the Council, to invite that representative to participate in the discussion, without the right to vote, in accordance with the relevant provisions of the Charter and rule 37 of the Council's provisional rules of procedure.

There being no objection, it is so decided.

At the invitation of the President, Mr. Sacirbey (Bosnia and Herzegovina) took a seat at the Council table.

The President: The Security Council will now begin its consideration of the item on its agenda. The Security Council is meeting in accordance with the understanding reached in its prior consultations.

Members of the Council have before them the report of the Secretary-General pursuant to Security Council resolution 1088 (1996), document S/1997/224 and Add.1.

Members of the Council also have before them document S/1997/263, which contains the text of a draft resolution prepared in the course of the Council's prior consultations.

It is my understanding that the Security Council is ready to proceed to the vote on the draft resolution (S/1997/263) before it. If I hear no objection, I shall put the draft resolution to the vote now.

There being no objection, it is so decided.

A vote was taken by show of hands.

In favour:

Chile, China, Costa Rica, Egypt, France, Guinea-Bissau, Japan, Kenya, Poland, Portugal, Republic of Korea, Russian Federation, Sweden, United Kingdom of Great Britain and Northern Ireland, United States of America

The President: There were 15 votes in favour. The draft resolution has been adopted unanimously as resolution 1103 (1997).

The Security Council has thus concluded the present stage of its consideration of the item on its agenda.

The meeting rose at 6.30 p.m.

United Nations S/PV.3761

Security Council
Fifty-second Year

Provisional

3761st Meeting
Friday, 4 April 1997, 1.10 p.m.
New York

President:	Mr. Monteiro	(Portugal)
Members:	Chile	Mr. Larraín
	China	Mr. Liu Jieyi
	Costa Rica	Mr. Sáenz
	Egypt	Mr. Awaad
	France	Mr. Thiebaud
	Guinea-Bissau	Mr. Cabral
	Japan	Mr. Takasu
	Kenya	Mr. Rana
	Poland	Mr. Madej
	Republic of Korea	Mr. Choi
	Russian Federation	Mr. Smirnov
	Sweden	Mr. Osvald
	United Kingdom of Great Britain and Northern Ireland	Mrs. Cross
	United States of America	Mr. Gnehm

Agenda

Letters dated 20 and 23 December 1991, from France, the United Kingdom of Great Britain and Northern Ireland and the United States of America (S/23306, S/23307, S/23308, S/23309 and S/23317)

97-85350 (E)

This record contains the original text of speeches delivered in English and interpretations of speeches delivered in the other languages. The final text will be printed in the *Official Records of the Security Council*. Corrections should be submitted to original speeches only. They should be incorporated in a copy of the record and be sent under the signature of a member of the delegation concerned, *within one week of the date of publication*, to the Chief of the Verbatim Reporting Service, room C-178.

The meeting was called to order at 1.10 p.m.

Expression of thanks to the retiring President

The President: As this is the first meeting of the Security Council for the month of April, I should like to take this opportunity to pay tribute, on behalf of the Council, to His Excellency Mr. Zbigniew Maria Wlosowicz, Permanent Representative of Poland to the United Nations, for his service as President of the Security Council for the month of March 1997. I am sure I speak for all members of the Security Council in expressing deep appreciation to Ambassador Wlosowicz for the great diplomatic skill with which he conducted the Council's business last month.

Adoption of the agenda

The agenda was adopted.

Letters dated 20 and 23 December 1991, from France, the United Kingdom of Great Britain and Northern Ireland and the United States of America (S/23306, S/23307, S/23308, S/23309 and S/23317)

The President: The Security Council will now begin its consideration of the item on its agenda. The Council is meeting in accordance with the understanding reached in its prior consultations.

Following consultations among members of the Security Council, I have been authorized to make the following statement on behalf of the Council:

"On 29 March 1997, a Libyan-registered aircraft flew from Tripoli, Libya, to Jeddah, Saudi Arabia. The Security Council considers this clear violation of Council resolution 748 (1992) of 31 March 1992 as totally unacceptable and calls on Libya to refrain from any further such violations. It recalls that arrangements have been made consistent with resolution 748 (1992) in order to fly Libyan pilgrims to perform the Hajj. The Council will review the matter should further violations occur.

"The Council has requested the Committee established pursuant to resolution 748 (1992) to draw to the attention of Member States their obligations under resolution 748 (1992) in the event that Libyan-registered aircraft land in their territory."

This statement will be issued as a document of the Security Council under the symbol S/PRST/1997/18.

The Security Council has thus concluded the present stage of its consideration of the item on the agenda. The Security Council will remain seized of the matter.

The meeting rose at 1.15 p.m.

United Nations S/PV.3762

Security Council

Fifty-second Year

Provisional

3762nd Meeting

Friday, 4 April 1997, 8.40 p.m.

New York

President:	Mr. Monteiro	(Portugal)
Members:	Chile	Mr. Eguiguren
	China	Mr. Liu Jieyi
	Costa Rica	Mr. Sáenz Biolley
	Egypt	Mr. Awaad
	France	Mr. Dejammet
	Guinea-Bissau	Mr. Cabral
	Japan	Mr. Takasu
	Kenya	Mr. Rana
	Poland	Mr. Matuszewski
	Republic of Korea	Mr. Choi
	Russian Federation	Mr. Fedotov
	Sweden	Mr. Osvald
	United Kingdom of Great Britain and Northern Ireland	Sir John Weston
	United States of America	Mr. Richardson

Agenda

The situation in the Great Lakes region

97-85357 (E)

This record contains the original text of speeches delivered in English and interpretations of speeches delivered in the other languages. The final text will be printed in the *Official Records of the Security Council*. Corrections should be submitted to original speeches only. They should be incorporated in a copy of the record and be sent under the signature of a member of the delegation concerned, *within one week of the date of publication*, to the Chief of the Verbatim Reporting Service, room C-178.

The meeting was called to order at 8.40 p.m.

Adoption of the agenda

The agenda was adopted.

The situation in the Great Lakes region

The President: The Security Council will now begin its consideration of the item on its agenda. The Security Council is meeting in accordance with the understanding reached in its prior consultations.

I should like to draw the attention of the members of the Council to document S/1997/269, which contains the text of a letter dated 2 April 1997 from the Chargé d'affaires *ad interim* of the Permanent Mission of Togo to the United Nations addressed to the Secretary-General transmitting the text of the statement adopted at the conclusion of the first special session of the Conference of Heads of State and Government of the Central Organ of the Organization of African Unity (OAU) Mechanism for Conflict Prevention, Management and Resolution, held in Lomé on 26 and 27 March 1997, which was devoted to the situation in eastern Zaire.

Following consultations among members of the Security Council, I have been authorized to make the following statement on behalf of the Council:

"The Security Council reiterates its deep concern about the alarming situation of refugees and displaced persons in eastern Zaire.

"The Security Council underlines the obligation of all concerned to respect the relevant provisions of international humanitarian law.

"The Security Council, while noting that some cooperation has recently been extended to humanitarian relief agencies by the Alliance of Democratic Forces for the Liberation of Congo/Zaire (ADFL), strongly urges the parties, and in particular the ADFL, to ensure unrestricted and safe access by United Nations agencies and other humanitarian organizations to guarantee the provision of humanitarian assistance to, and the safety of, all refugees, displaced persons and other affected civilian inhabitants.

"The Security Council also urges the ADFL to cooperate fully with the United Nations in the implementation of the repatriation plan for eastern Zaire of the United Nations High Commissioner for Refugees. In this context, it calls on the Government of Rwanda to facilitate the implementation of this plan.

"The Security Council will remain actively seized of the matter."

This statement will be issued as a document of the Security Council under the symbol S/PRST/1997/19.

The Security Council has thus concluded the present stage of its consideration of the item on the agenda.

The meeting rose at 8.50 p.m.

United Nations S/PV.3763

Security Council
Fifty-second Year

Provisional

3763rd Meeting
Tuesday, 8 April 1997, 12.15 p.m.
New York

President:	Mr. Monteiro	(Portugal)
Members:	Chile	Mr. Larraín
	China	Mr. Liu Jieyi
	Costa Rica	Mr. Sáenz Biolley
	Egypt	Mr. Awaad
	France	Mr. Legal
	Guinea-Bissau	Mr. Cabral
	Japan	Mr. Tanaka
	Kenya	Mr. Rana
	Poland	Mr. Wlosowicz
	Republic of Korea	Mr. Choi
	Russian Federation	Mr. Karev
	Sweden	Mr. Osvald
	United Kingdom of Great Britain and Northern Ireland	Ms. Wilmshurst
	United States of America	Mr. Richardson

Agenda

Establishment of an international tribunal for the prosecution of persons responsible for serious violations of international humanitarian law committed in the territory of the former Yugoslavia

Establishment of the list of candidates for Judges

97-85363 (E)

This record contains the original text of speeches delivered in English and interpretations of speeches delivered in the other languages. The final text will be printed in the *Official Records of the Security Council*. Corrections should be submitted to original speeches only. They should be incorporated in a copy of the record and be sent under the signature of a member of the delegation concerned, *within one week of the date of publication*, to the Chief of the Verbatim Reporting Service, room C-178.

The meeting was called to order at 12.15 p.m.

Adoption of the agenda

The agenda was adopted.

Establishment of an international tribunal for the prosecution of persons responsible for serious violations of international humanitarian law committed in the territory of the former Yugoslavia

Establishment of the list of candidates for Judges

The President: The Security Council will now begin its consideration of the item on its agenda.

The Security Council is meeting in accordance with the understanding reached in its prior consultations.

Members of the Council have before them document S/1997/283, which contains the text of a draft resolution prepared in the course of the Council's prior consultations.

It is my understanding that the Council is ready to proceed to vote on the draft resolution (S/1997/283) before it. If I hear no objection, I shall put the draft resolution to the vote now.

There being no objection, it is so decided.

A vote was taken by show of hands.

In favour:

Chile, China, Costa Rica, Egypt, France, Guinea-Bissau, Japan, Kenya, Poland, Portugal, Republic of Korea, Russian Federation, Sweden, United Kingdom of Great Britain and Northern Ireland, United States of America

The President: There were 15 votes in favour. The draft resolution has been adopted unanimously as resolution 1104 (1997).

The Security Council has thus concluded the present stage of its consideration of the item on its agenda.

The meeting rose at 12.20 p.m.

United Nations S/PV.3764

Security Council
Fifty-second Year

Provisional

3764th Meeting
Wednesday, 9 April 1997, 1.10 p.m.
New York

President:	Mr. Monteiro	(Portugal)
Members:	Chile	Mr. Larraín
	China	Mr. Liu Jieyi
	Costa Rica	Mr. Sáenz Biolley
	Egypt	Mr. Awaad
	France	Mr. Legal
	Guinea-Bissau	Ms. Da Rosa
	Japan	Mr. Tanaka
	Kenya	Mr. Rana
	Poland	Mr. Matuszewski
	Republic of Korea	Mr. Choi
	Russian Federation	Mr. Fedotov
	Sweden	Mr. Osvald
	United Kingdom of Great Britain and Northern Ireland	Mr. Gomersall
	United States of America	Mr. Gnehm

Agenda

The situation in the former Yugoslav Republic of Macedonia

Letter dated 3 April 1997 from the Secretary-General addressed to the President of the Security Council (S/1997/276)

97-85370 (E)

This record contains the original text of speeches delivered in English and interpretations of speeches delivered in the other languages. The final text will be printed in the *Official Records of the Security Council*. Corrections should be submitted to original speeches only. They should be incorporated in a copy of the record and be sent under the signature of a member of the delegation concerned, *within one week of the date of publication*, to the Chief of the Verbatim Reporting Service, room C-178.

The meeting was called to order at 1.10 p.m.

Adoption of the agenda

The agenda was adopted.

The situation in the former Yugoslav Republic of Macedonia

Letter dated 3 April 1997 from the Secretary-General addressed to the President of the Security Council (S/1996/276)

The President: I should like to inform the Council that I have received a letter from the representative of the former Yugoslav Republic of Macedonia, in which he requests to be invited to participate in the discussion of the item on the Council's agenda. In conformity with the usual practice, I propose, with the consent of the Council, to invite that representative to participate in the discussion, without the right to vote, in accordance with the relevant provisions of the Charter and rule 37 of the Council's provisional rules of procedure.

There being no objection, it is so decided.

At the invitation of the President, Mr. Čalovski (the former Yugoslav Republic of Macedonia) took a seat at the Council table.

The President: The Security Council will now begin its consideration of the item on its agenda. The Security Council is meeting in accordance with the understanding reached in its prior consultations.

Members of the Council have before them the letter dated 3 April 1997 from the Secretary-General addressed to the President of the Security Council, document S/1997/276.

Members of the Council also have before them document S/1997/290, which contains the text of a draft resolution prepared in the course of the Council's prior consultations.

I should like to draw the attention of the members of the Council to document S/1997/267, which contains the text of the letter dated 1 April 1997 from the Permanent Representative of the former Yugoslav Republic of Macedonia to the United Nations addressed to the Secretary-General, transmitting the text of a letter dated 1 April 1997 from the Minister for Foreign Affairs of the former Yugoslav Republic of Macedonia addressed to the Secretary-General.

It is my understanding that the Council is ready to proceed to the vote on the draft resolution (S/1997/290) before it. Unless I hear any objection, I shall put the draft resolution to the vote now.

There being no objection, it is so decided.

A vote was taken by show of hands.

In favour:

Chile, China, Costa Rica, Egypt, France, Guinea-Bissau, Japan, Kenya, Poland, Portugal, Republic of Korea, Russian Federation, Sweden, United Kingdom of Great Britain and Northern Ireland, United States of America

The President: The result of the voting is as follows: the resolution received 15 votes in favour. The draft resolution has been adopted unanimously as resolution 1105 (1997).

There are no further speakers. The Security Council has thus concluded the present stage of its consideration of the item on its agenda.

The meeting rose at 1.15 p.m.

United Nations S/PV.3765

Security Council

Fifty-second Year

Provisional

3765th Meeting

Monday, 14 April 1997, 4 p.m.

New York

President:	Mr. Monteiro	(Portugal)
Members:	Chile	Mr. Somavía
	China	Mr. Wang Xuexian
	Costa Rica	Mr. Sáenz Biolley
	Egypt	Mr. Elaraby
	France	Mr. Dejammet
	Guinea-Bissau	Mr. Cabral
	Japan	Mr. Owada
	Kenya	Mr. Mahugu
	Poland	Mr. Matuszewski
	Republic of Korea	Mr. Choi
	Russian Federation	Mr. Lavrov
	Sweden	Mr. Osvald
	United Kingdom of Great Britain and Northern Ireland	Sir John Weston
	United States of America	Mr. Gnehm

Agenda

The situation in Afghanistan

97-85377 (E)

This record contains the original text of speeches delivered in English and interpretations of speeches delivered in the other languages. The final text will be printed in the *Official Records of the Security Council*. Corrections should be submitted to original speeches only. They should be incorporated in a copy of the record and be sent under the signature of a member of the delegation concerned, *within one week of the date of publication*, to the Chief of the Verbatim Reporting Service, room C-178.

The meeting was called to order at 4:20 p.m.

Adoption of the agenda

The agenda was adopted.

The situation in Afghanistan

The President: I should like to inform the Council that I have received a letter from the representatives of Afghanistan, Germany, the Islamic Republic of Iran, Italy, the Netherlands, Pakistan and Turkey, in which they request to be invited to participate in the discussion of the item on the Council's agenda. In conformity with the usual practice, I propose, with the consent of the Council, to invite those representatives to participate in the discussion, without the right to vote, in accordance with the relevant provisions of the Charter and rule 37 of the Council's provisional rules of procedure.

There being no objection, it is so decided.

On behalf of the Council, I welcome the Acting Minister for Foreign Affairs of Afghanistan.

At the invitation of the President, Mr. Ghafoorzai (Afghanistan) took a seat at the Council table; Mr. Rudolph (Germany), Mr. Kharrazi (Islamic Republic of Iran), Mr. Terzi di Sant'Agata (Italy), Mr. Biegman (Netherlands), Mr. Kamal (Pakistan) and Mr. Çelem (Turkey), took the seats reserved for them at the side of the Council Chamber.

The President: I should like to inform the Council that I have received a letter dated 11 April 1997 from the Permanent Representative of Indonesia to the United Nations, which reads as follows:

> "I have the honour to request that the Security Council extend an invitation under rule 39 of its provisional rules of procedure to His Excellency Ambassador Engin A. Ansay, Permanent Observer of the Organization of the Islamic Conference to the United Nations, during the Council's forthcoming discussion of the item entitled 'The situation in Afghanistan'."

That letter will be issued as a document of the Security Council under the symbol S/1997/305.

If I hear no objection, I shall take it that the Council agrees to extend an invitation under rule 39 to Mr. Engin A. Ansay.

There being no objection, it is so decided.

The Security Council will now begin its consideration of the item on its agenda.

The Council is meeting in accordance with the understanding reached in its prior consultations.

I should like to draw the attention of the members of the Council to document S/1997/240 and Corr.1, which contains the report of the Secretary-General dated 16 March 1997 on the situation in Afghanistan.

The first speaker is the Acting Minister for Foreign Affairs of Afghanistan, on whom I now call.

Mr. Ghafoorzai (Afghanistan): At the outset, I wish to congratulate you, Sir, on your assumption of the presidency of the Council for the month of April. We are sure that your broad knowledge of international issues and your diplomatic skill will contribute to the successful conduct of the Security Council's work during the month of April. I would also like to take this opportunity to pay tribute to the outgoing President.

I sincerely thank the Council for convening this special meeting on the current situation in Afghanistan.

The last two decades have seen Afghanistan become an issue of concern for the world. Each year, it seems that new dimensions are added to the protracted, annihilating conflict in our country, the land of perilous events and critical circumstances. The desire of the Afghan nation for a durable peace is fading away, with military interventions and corporate interests acting as obstacles to peace rather than catalysts for peace. We believe that if the Afghan problem is not addressed with sincerity and caution, Afghanistan will present the world with serious dangers that will have subsequent ramifications. It is therefore incumbent upon the members of the Council to note that the disastrous destabilizing effects of turmoil in Afghanistan can potentially spill over. With all the good for which the United Nations strives, I am quite confident that a political solution can be found for Afghanistan. Let us all contribute to that solution.

Respect for the independence, sovereignty and territorial integrity of countries is a recognized principle of the United Nations Charter and other international instruments. This requires all countries, in their international relations, to refrain from any kind of interference or intervention in the internal affairs of other States and to base their relations with others on the renowned guidelines of equality of States and mutual respect.

Likewise, recruiting, arming, training and dispatching an armed mercenary group assigned to destabilize another country's Government or jeopardize a political process are in violation of recognized principles of international law. Such moves deserve the condemnation of the entire international community, and any effort aimed at legitimizing such a mercenary group and the consequent effects of foreign-sponsored intervention sets dangerous precedents for international relations.

The Taliban qualify as the embodiment of such a mercenary group. In October 1996, I gave an adequate introduction of the Taliban mercenaries to this Council. They support international terrorism and shelter those who finance them. They commit gross and massive violations of human rights, particularly chain-lashing and beating women. As the members of the Council well know, the Taliban cultivate, process and export narcotics. Sadly, one of the new breaches of international humanitarian law committed by the Taliban is a Serbian-style "ethnic cleansing" involving 140,000 non-Pashtun Afghans, as widely reported by *The New York Times*, as well as by both Mr. Norbert Holl, Head of the United Nations Special Mission and Mr. Paik, Special Rapporteur on Human Rights for Afghanistan. We believe that the latest series of heinous acts constitute crimes of genocide punishable in accordance with relevant conventions.

On 8 April 1997, Mr. Choong Hyun Paik presented a report to the Commission on Human Rights in Geneva. In his report he informed the Commission of the displacement of 250,000 Afghans from their villages since October 1996. The report also briefed the Commission on mass violations of women's rights committed by the Taliban, including the beating of 225 women because they had not met the Taliban dress code. The women of Afghanistan, who compose more than half the Afghan population, would like their grievances to be heard by the Security Council.

The first sign of ethnic cleansing occurred in Sar-Cheshma, a small village north-west of Kabul, at a time when the Taliban had suffered major setbacks, on 23 October 1996. John Burns of *The New York Times* reminded readers that the razing of villages had already taken place during the 18 years of war in Afghanistan, but that

> "the twist this time was that the men who destroyed Sar-Cheshma were the turbaned warriors of the Taliban, the ultra-conservative Muslims who have imposed a medieval social order across much of Afghanistan ... The villagers of Sar-Cheshma say 30 Taliban fighters swept in at dawn on 23 October, then spent several hours pouring canisters of gasoline into the 120 courtyards, one after another, where hundreds of people live. Little remains but buckled bed frames and melted kitchen utensils".

Regarding the forced exodus of the non-Pashtun civilian population in January, we provided early information to the Security Council in document S/1997/54 of 21 January 1997. Since then the Taliban have forcibly evicted many other villagers from their homes and farms. The total estimate of victims facing forced eviction has since surpassed 150,000. It is the earnest expectation of the Islamic State of Afghanistan that the United Nations will appropriately address these grave violations of international humanitarian law committed by the Taliban. We hope that the United Nations will not spare Taliban advisers, supporters and financiers.

In identical letters dated 13 April 1997 — as recently as yesterday — addressed to the Secretary-General and to you, Sir, I drew the attention of the Security Council to an alarming situation. According to reliable accounts, the Taliban mercenaries — heavily reinforced from outside very recently — have been preparing a massive attack against northern Afghanistan to take place in the next few days. The mobilization of forces reaching Kabul is still continuing. Thousands of militia members from outside, whose identity and nationality have been well explained in previous communications addressed to the President of the Security Council and to the Secretary-General, are part of the mobilization. The Council may recall the involvement of "foreign military personnel" in the Afghan conflict, which was identified as inadmissible in resolution 1076 (1996) of 22 October 1996, as well as in General Assembly resolution 51/195 B of 17 December 1996.

The Islamic State of Afghanistan wishes to request the Security Council to take appropriate preventive measures to halt the onslaught which otherwise, apart from causing a social catastrophe, will negatively affect the peace process.

We have always emphasized the need for the existence of a positive regional atmosphere as an important factor for the cessation of the current crisis in Afghanistan. This desire of ours has been well received by all our neighbouring States except one. We are still waiting to see a change in the stance and attitude of this neighbour towards cooperation, understanding and participation in all common efforts, including peace initiatives.

We are certain that the nation of Pakistan supports non-interference in the internal affairs of Afghanistan and favours friendship and brotherhood with the Afghan nation. When Prime Minister Mian Nawaz Sharif gained the majority vote in the Pakistani elections, our hopes were further strengthened that he would abandon the stance of the former Pakistani Administration and shift the Pakistani position onto the path of fraternity, good-neighbourliness and mutual respect. His promise on a reconsideration of the Pakistani policy towards Afghanistan is in essence indicative of his approval of the Pakistani constituency's preference for friendship, mutual respect and brotherhood. We hope that fulfilment of that promise will assist us in the peace process and curtail the flow of arms and assistance to a group in Afghanistan that wants to impose draconian military rule.

A cessation of cross-border assistance to the Taliban would be a first step towards the realization of reconciliation, peace and stability in our country. If there is any country that fancies that it will be spared the ramifications of the flames of war and violence fuelled by the Taliban, let us remind it that it needs to do some deep thinking.

Permit me to refer to another factor which has bearing on the current Afghan situation: the gas and oil pipeline project referred to by the *Far Eastern Economic Review* of 10 April 1997 as a new Central Asian version of the nineteenth-century Great Game.

The Islamic State of Afghanistan is well aware of the outstanding economic significance of the projected gas and oil pipeline from Turkmenistan to Pakistan, and probably India, through the territory of Afghanistan. The significance attached to this project by some industrialized countries and the interest taken by major corporations in the construction of the pipeline have come to represent a classic political game and a struggle for the control of the ancient Silk Road, thus signifying a race for securing energy pipelines. This competition is undoubtedly about to create major political ramifications, jeopardizing regional peace and stability.

We appreciate this historic opportunity. We are ready to reap the benefits of the project, but only if it serves the supreme interests of Afghanistan. But we cannot afford to be part of a political game, because we have suffered enough. What we need is peace. Our salvation depends on our national unity. To achieve that, we need national reconciliation. Construction of the pipeline project should complement peace and reconciliation in Afghanistan and aim at extinguishing the flames of war rather than at fuelling them. Continued war and violence in Afghanistan would only delay not only the construction of the pipeline project but also the reconstruction and rehabilitation of our war-shattered homeland.

As stated during the gatherings of the Economic Cooperation Organization, and also as communicated to the Unocal-Delta Consortium and Bridas — the two leading competing corporations for the project — and in compliance with the memorandum of understanding signed by Afghanistan, Pakistan, Turkmenistan and Uzbekistan at the fourth summit of the Economic Cooperation Organization held in Ashgabat in May 1996, Afghanistan believes that the construction of this project may best be done through a consortium representing all interested multinational corporations. Otherwise, we would be ready to negotiate with a company that will not tie the project to any political conditions and would be ready to take preliminary practical steps for the project's implementation.

We believe that with a view to the achievement of a durable political settlement in Afghanistan and to the alleviation of regional and international concern at the prolonged conflict in Afghanistan, the Security Council will appreciate all of the harsh and complex realities in our country. The Islamic State of Afghanistan actively cooperates with the Head of the United Nations Special Mission to Afghanistan and will positively consider any peace plan that is in conformity with Security Council and General Assembly resolutions.

A military solution in Afghanistan would be a serious threat to the peace and security of the region. As

clearly indicated in paragraph 7 of the report of the Secretary-General dated 16 March 1997,

> "The Taliban, judging both from their words and from their activities on the ground, appear determined to gain military and political control of the whole of Afghanistan and to establish their" — and I emphasize "their" — "vision of an Islamic State. They view the other side as opposed to this goal." (*S/1997/240, para. 7*)

We earnestly believe that the Security Council should take appropriate measures, including sanctions against the Taliban and their supporters, who are supplying arms and logistical support and are preaching an appeasement policy towards the Taliban.

Armed popular opposition, including mass civil unrest against the Taliban, is continuing to increase. Many districts in the eastern provinces of Kunar and Laghman and the north-western province of Badghis have very recently been liberated with the assistance of the Supreme Council for the Defence of Afghanistan.

All that I have stated is not to justify the Islamic State of Afghanistan as the only Power capable of bringing peace to the entire country, although the foundations of the Government have broadened considerably, to include the Eastern Council of Nangarhar. Rather it is to emphasize the serious ramifications of the continuation of assistance being channeled to the Taliban, which poses a threat to democracy, human rights and peace and stability — not only in Afghanistan but in the entire region.

Having fervently stood by the ideals of the United Nations, the Islamic State of Afghanistan, despite incalculable odds, has struggled for the preservation of the national independence, unity, sovereignty and territorial integrity of Afghanistan, and continues to do so. While we believe there is no military solution to our country's multifaceted problems, the Islamic State of Afghanistan has no viable option other than to resist the Taliban's agenda. Just a few years ago, we halted a Soviet thrust southward, so that part of the world would be safer. Today we are striving to contain the Taliban within Afghanistan, because we are committed to regional and global peace and stability. Yet we still hold the conviction that the return of peace and stability to Afghanistan requires a national accord reached between all sides. This can only be achieved through serious negotiations, for which the Islamic State of Afghanistan has always expressed its readiness. Today, we are still ready.

The President: I thank the Acting Minister for Foreign Affairs of Afghanistan for the kind words he addressed to me.

Mr. Lavrov (Russian Federation) (*interpretation from Russian*): It is a pleasure for me to welcome the Acting Minister for Foreign Affairs of Afghanistan, Mr. Ghafoorzai, to this Chamber today.

Although a month has already passed since the Secretary-General submitted his report on Afghanistan to the Security Council and to the General Assembly, the situation in that country continues to retain its alarming momentum. The military situation is deteriorating, and efforts towards a political settlement are at a standstill. Human rights violations continue, in particular discrimination against women. Afghanistan remains a source of the illegal spread of drugs and of international terrorism. Thus, the situation in that country continues to represent a threat to international peace and security in the region, and is fraught with the danger of a large-scale humanitarian catastrophe.

Russia is deeply concerned over this course of events. Unfortunately, the warring factions in Afghanistan have not heeded numerous appeals, *inter alia* from the Security Council and the General Assembly, regarding the need to renounce attempts to resolve the conflict by military means.

We are particularly alarmed by the fact that the Taliban movement continues to try to press ahead with its military effort. Moreover, as is well known, because of the Taliban position, there has been absolutely no result from the meetings of the Intra-Afghan Working Group, held under the auspices of the United Nations Special Mission. After those meetings, the Head of the Special Mission, Mr. Holl, undertook efforts to convene a political meeting of the Afghan parties, but these too have so far yielded no results.

We call upon all of the Afghan parties — and first and foremost the Taliban movement — to implement United Nations decisions, to cooperate fully with the United Nations Special Mission and to embark seriously on the path of negotiations. Only thus, and not through a build-up of military pressure, will it be possible to achieve a lasting peace in Afghanistan. A solution to the problem of achieving national reconciliation and a stable political settlement to this conflict, which has gone on for many years, is possible through the establishment of a fully representative and broad-based transitional

government. For this purpose, the Afghan parties must immediately cease hostilities, renounce the use of force and put aside their differences in the name of the higher interest of the Afghan people.

The Russian Federation fully supports the activities of the United Nations Special Mission in Afghanistan, headed by Mr. Holl, and is ready to continue to render the necessary assistance. The United Nations must play a central role in Afghan affairs, *inter alia* in ensuring the proper coordination of international efforts aimed at supporting a settlement and in exerting pressure on the Afghan parties. We believe indeed that the United Nations, and in particular the Special Mission, has every opportunity to enhance its role.

It is difficult to agree with the assertion that the dreadful conflict in Afghanistan seems somehow to have remained on the sidelines of the Security Council's attention. In our view, in carrying out its functions under the Charter, the Council must continue constantly to follow the development of the situation in Afghanistan and to react adequately to it through the adoption of appropriate measures. The Council's previous decisions contain a good basis for searching for means to settle the conflict. These decisions must be implemented. One of these is that supplying weapons to the warring factions and rendering them other types of military and technical assistance must cease.

States with an influence on Afghan affairs must make every effort to move the situation to political channels. We hope that the meeting to be convened by the Secretary-General, the second meeting of concerned countries on Afghanistan, will provide an additional impetus for reaching agreement on approaches to an Afghan settlement.

The complex humanitarian situation also requires further measures to ease the suffering of the Afghan people. We are deeply convinced that humanitarian assistance must not be used as a bargaining chip in this struggle among the factions to win over to their side the population of one or another region of the country. We believe it is important that humanitarian organizations should render assistance to all those who are in need, throughout the entire territory of Afghanistan.

The Russian Federation is making maximum efforts to promote the cause of a settlement in Afghanistan. In close consultations with its Central Asian partners in the Commonwealth of Independent States (CIS) — Kazakstan, Kyrgyztan, Tajikistan and Uzbekistan — Russia is carefully following the situation and is taking steps aimed at promoting political dialogue and preventing the Afghan crisis from having a negative impact on the entire region of Central Asia.

At the same time, we are maintaining our useful and extremely productive contacts on Afghanistan with other States of the region, in particular India, Iran and Pakistan. We believe that the coordinated efforts of all concerned States will help in reaching a formula acceptable to all for a settlement in Afghanistan.

The Russian delegation believes that the Security Council will be dealing with Afghan issues in the future. We believe that, following the results of today's discussion of the situation in Afghanistan, it will be necessary for the Security Council to adopt a presidential statement, that once again clearly reaffirms the basic approach of the United Nations to a settlement in Afghanistan.

Mr. Wang Xuexian (China) (*interpretation from Chinese*): The Security Council has convened this formal meeting to discuss the question of Afghanistan, which clearly shows the importance the international community attaches to this question. We sincerely hope that today's open debate will be conducive to a peaceful settlement of the Afghan question.

The rivalries between the Afghan factions, and the long drawn-out strife, have brought perpetual turmoil and misery to the Afghan people. The Afghan conflict has led to instability in the region. As a close neighbour of Afghanistan, China wishes to express its profound concern and disquiet. The Chinese Government believes that the achievement of national reconciliation is the key to a just and lasting settlement of the Afghan question. The final settlement of this question depends, fundamentally, on the Afghan people themselves. It follows that, first, all sides concerned should show the sincere political will to settle their differences through peaceful negotiation. Secondly, the parties concerned should immediately implement a ceasefire and cease all hostilities. In our view, the attempt to use military means to settle the conflict will only aggravate the conflict, plunging the Afghan people into dire misery indefinitely.

This problem has many complex causes. We urge all sides to take account of the fundamental interests of the Afghan people, bury the hatchet, set aside their political and religious differences and engage in serious

negotiations so as to establish as early as possible a stable, broad-based government acceptable to all sides.

We appreciate and support the good offices of the Secretary-General and his special representative in seeking a political settlement of this question. We hope that the United Nations can continue to play a central, leading role in this field. At the same time, we have also noted the political and diplomatic efforts of the countries concerned in the region to give impetus to the settlement of this question, and we welcome those efforts. We hope that, through the joint efforts of the international community, favourable conditions can be created for the settlement of this question. We look forward to the day when there will be a comprehensive and political settlement to the Afghan question.

Mr. Elaraby (Egypt) (*interpretation from Arabic*): At the outset, I should like to express the sincere appreciation of the delegation of Egypt to the Secretary-General for his most recent report, presented to both the General Assembly and the Security Council, on developments in the situation in Afghanistan over the past three months. I should also like to express our appreciation for the sincere efforts being made by the special representative of the Secretary-General, Mr. Norbert Holl, which are aimed at achieving a comprehensive settlement. It gives me pleasure to welcome His Excellency the Acting Foreign Minister of Afghanistan, to whose statement we listened with great care.

The Security Council's convening of a meeting today to consider the deteriorating situation in Afghanistan clearly reflects the profound and continued concern of the international community over the tension and instability that Afghanistan is experiencing for the seventeenth consecutive year. That situation has exhausted the Afghan people, devastated its capabilities and depleted its resources. It has become a source of tension and concern not only for the Central Asian region, but for numerous other regions of the world, which are suffering from the negative repercussions of the Afghan crisis. Such repercussions have taken the form of terrorist activities, carried out by extremists of various nationalities trained in Afghanistan. In this regard, I should like to refer to reports on the reopening of two camps for training terrorists in a city in southern Afghanistan, as well as to press reports confirming the presence of some of the individuals who lead and finance terrorist movements in various countries.

The continued preference of some of the warring Afghan parties for the military option, and their intransigence and lack of responsiveness to the strenuous efforts of the special representative to achieve a comprehensive settlement, confirm the need to develop the efforts currently being made by the United Nations and to direct these efforts to more practical steps leading to the creation of the climate necessary for the implementation of the proposals made to date and of the resolutions adopted by the General Assembly and the Security Council on this subject.

The report of the Secretary-General contains a reference to regional meetings held in an attempt to achieve a solution to this crisis. The report refers to the efforts of the Special Mission, which led to meetings of the Intra-Afghan Working Group from 13 to 15 January and 24 to 26 February in Islamabad, during which several questions were discussed, including the ceasefire, the exchange of the prisoners of war and other confidence-building measures. Egypt believes that there is a great need for the coordination of all efforts made by the parties concerned under the supervision of the United Nations Special Mission, as well as the expansion of these efforts to include the ceasefire and other measures that have been discussed. Such coordination would undoubtedly lead to the success of these efforts. In this regard, the elements that were discussed in the meetings of the Working Group could serve as the nucleus of the beginning of serious dialogue between the Afghan parties under the supervision of the United Nations.

The proposal made by the Secretary-General in his report to consider the holding of a meeting of the warring Afghan parties outside Afghanistan under the supervision of the United Nations, and with the cooperation of the Organization of the Islamic Conference and other organizations concerned, clearly constitutes basis for future action. We hope that all outside parties concerned with the problem of Afghanistan will support such a plan. We also hope that the Secretary-General will, at the earliest opportunity, provide a clear outline of this plan in the light of his consultations with all the States concerned that have influence in Afghanistan.

At another level, the Non-Aligned Movement expressed its concern over the Afghan problem in the final communiqué of the ministerial meeting held at New Delhi earlier this month and expressed the need for the Afghan parties to move towards national reconciliation, in accordance with the relevant Security Council and General Assembly resolutions. This concern of the non-aligned countries — in addition to the increasing concern of the States members of the European Union and its

communiqués on this subject, and the concern evinced by the Commonwealth of Independent States (CIS) — will give the necessary impetus for a comprehensive movement supported by all the members of the international community.

On 9 April last year the delegation of Egypt pointed out that the form of the proposed settlement is not the real cause of the continuation of the current crisis. The essence of the crisis is the lack of political will for peace on the part of some parties. At that time, we reaffirmed that the way out of this dark tunnel was through the mobilization of political will on three levels: first, the political will for peace on the part of the Afghan parties themselves, some of which seem, as has been indicated in various reports of the Secretary-General, still to prefer a military option; secondly, the reaffirmation of the cessation of all outside military assistance to the parties to the conflict as the point of departure for any tangible efforts made by the United Nations; and, thirdly, the political will of the international community itself. Since the end of last year, the international community has seemed ready to refocus on the situation in Afghanistan. This has been seen in, among other things, the formation of the group of interested countries and countries with influence in Afghanistan, which held its first meeting last November upon the initiative of Mr. Boutros-Ghali, the former Secretary-General of the Organization. We hope that this group will be given the opportunity to discharge its necessary role.

What is necessary at this time is to highlight the question of Afghanistan among the priorities of the work of the United Nations, to give new momentum to the political will of the Afghan parties and the countries with influence and to direct them towards the establishment of peace in Afghanistan.

Among the matters causing grave alarm are the negative repercussions of the tense situation in Afghanistan on the Afghan citizens, whose suffering continues as a result of the absence of peace in their country. The continued dangers of landmines, the dire nutritional situation, and the growing problems of refugees and displaced persons make a prompt settlement all the more urgent.

All the rehabilitation activities carried out by the United Nations in Afghanistan, the important and tangible results of which started to appear after the consolidated appeal made by the Secretary-General, which was followed by the meeting at Ashgabat for assistance to Afghanistan, constitute but a tiny fraction of the massive volume of assistance needed by Afghanistan. The infrastructure is in dire need of continued rehabilitation plans supported by the international community.

In this regard, the delegation of Egypt would like to reaffirm the importance of striking a balance and establishing a link between the political side and the economic side in the process of reaching a peaceful settlement in Afghanistan. A link between those two aspects constitutes one of the practical ways to encourage or, if need be, deter the Afghan parties, linking economic assistance to the degree of flexibility shown by each party to the conflict in efforts for a political settlement.

Finally, the delegation of Egypt would like to reaffirm that this open debate could promote a political settlement of the question of Afghanistan. However, this will require the beginning of a wide-based political dialogue through which national reconciliation can be achieved in a manner that will ensure the preservation of the sovereignty, unity and territorial integrity of Afghanistan; promote the efforts for development, rehabilitation and reconstruction; contribute to the prompt return of refugees and displaced persons to their countries; and achieve security and well-being for the fraternal people of Afghanistan.

Sir John Weston (United Kingdom): This Council last discussed the disturbing situation in Afghanistan in a formal meeting on 16 October last year. It is useful that we should do so again, particularly while we are able to take advantage of the presence of Mr. Holl, the Head of the United Nations Special Mission to Afghanistan, here in New York.

The United Kingdom remains deeply concerned at the continued fighting in Afghanistan and at the suffering of its people. We hope that spring will prove to be the season for a peace offensive, not a military offensive. The continued search for peace remains vital.

At the forefront of this search are Mr. Holl and the United Nations Special Mission. The United Nations Special Mission deserves the full support of this Council and all Member States. General Assembly resolution 51/195 described the United Nations as a universally recognized intermediary and set out its central and impartial role in seeking a peaceful solution. We fully endorse this description.

Among their other achievements, we particularly applaud the success of Mr. Holl and the United Nations

Special Mission in getting the Afghan parties together in Islamabad on two occasions in recent weeks. It is essential that the Special Mission be afforded every assistance in building on these contacts. It must be able to benefit from the influence of States in the region over different factions. We hope that the United Nations Special Mission's contacts with these States will intensify, as foreseen by General Assembly resolution 50/88. All States should give their full backing to the United Nations Special Mission and refrain from parallel initiatives which could cut across its efforts.

We are concerned that the parties continue to receive arms from outside, despite the clear call in Security Council resolution 1076 (1996) for this to stop. The European Union has adopted an embargo on arms sales to Afghanistan, which has been supported by associate countries. Other countries should adopt a similar position of restraint.

There can be no military solution which offers lasting peace in Afghanistan. We hope that the factions will learn this lesson without inflicting another round of fighting on the long-suffering Afghan people. The United Nations Special Mission's priority must be the negotiation of an immediate ceasefire. It must also continue to work for a settlement which offers a fully representative, broad-based transitional government and preserves the sovereignty and territorial integrity of Afghanistan. Peace cannot be lasting if the country is riven by ethnic divisions. All factions must be open to working together with others and to respecting the rights of different faiths and different ethnic groups.

United Nations agencies can also discuss practical measures with the factions which can improve Afghanistan's future. The factions need to have a better understanding of the costs of war, the benefits of peace and the need for Afghanistan to play a constructive role in restoring stability to the region. These issues include health, demining, return of refugees and economic reconstruction.

A particular priority is rooting out the criminal drug culture which pervades Afghanistan and has an invidious effect beyond Afghanistan's borders. The factions are committed to working with the international community to tackle this problem. We expect those commitments to be honoured. For its part, the United Kingdom has donated £900,000 to the United Nations Drug Control Programme to combat drugs in Afghanistan, conditional upon the parties cooperating fully with the United Nations International Drug Control Programme, and we have pledged a further £1 million.

The United Kingdom remains one of the largest donors of humanitarian aid to Afghanistan. It donated £7 million in 1996-1997. We will continue to work with other donors to ensure that aid reaches all Afghans, regardless of gender and consistent with the approach of Security Council resolution 1076 (1996), which denounces discrimination against women and girls. We were glad to participate in the donors' meeting in Ashgabat in January, which reaffirmed this approach. We would encourage all agencies working in Afghanistan to continue to work to a single set of opportunity criteria in this respect.

The meeting also agreed upon arrangements for improved United Nations coordination of humanitarian aid. These now need to be implemented in full. It also makes sense for the United Nations Office for the Coordination of Humanitarian Assistance to Afghanistan and the United Nations Special Mission to Afghanistan to work closely together. They share a common desire for peace in Afghanistan, and they should exploit the synergies between the aid effort and the political process.

We applaud the work of the humanitarian agencies in Afghanistan. They are working tirelessly, often in dangerous circumstances, to help the victims of the conflict. The factions should respect the aid agencies, which are there are to help the Afghan people.

The people of Afghanistan have suffered for too long. The international community should send a clear message that they want this spring to be a season of peace, not further fighting and misery. The United Nations Special Mission should intensify its efforts to find a solution. Its success depends on all States offering their full support, cutting off external support to the factions and continuing to provide aid to the people. We call on all States to do just that.

Mr. Cabral (Guinea-Bissau) (*interpretation from French*): For many years, Afghanistan has continuously and disturbingly been in the foreground of the international stage. As control of Afghanistan, we are told, is one of the keys to some hegemonic stratagems, both old and new, this country has always been coveted. However, and despite the vicissitudes of time and a gamut of trials, Afghanistan tried to re-establish its place in the world after having achieved independence — after its liberation, I should say — in 1919.

After the adoption in 1964 of a constitution that recognized the separation of political, legislative and

judicial powers, there was relative stability, which opened the way to the full enjoyment by Afghan citizens of both genders of their civic, political and economic rights. Unfortunately, that period was not to last, being abruptly interrupted by a military *coup d'état* in 1973. Afghanistan thus once again became a linchpin in the war of influence among the countries of the region and hence a pawn of global politics. The satellitization of the country in 1979 further exacerbated East-West rivalries and fanned tension caused by the cold war. The evolution of the events which have continuously overwhelmed the Afghan people is too well known for us to dwell further on it, except to express the concern of Guinea-Bissau at a worsening situation.

The successive reports of the Secretary-General on Afghanistan suffice to demonstrate that, despite United Nations efforts, the crisis remains severe. The Security Council and the General Assembly, as well as the Non-Aligned Movement and the Organization of the Islamic Conference, have all tried by means of many resolutions to chart the course to be followed in the search for a peaceful solution to the conflict in Afghanistan. It has not yet been possible to achieve the negotiated solution for which the international community has advocated for many years. War continues because to date the factions have been unable to reach an understanding amongst themselves, which, unfortunately, has led to continued fighting and to the complete ruin of the country.

Today the Security Council is meeting at a crucial moment in the history of Afghanistan. The reports from this country are very troubling. Violence continues to claim many victims among the civilian population. In Afghanistan, a people is in the throes of a war in which adversaries do not hesitate to use vile methods to achieve their purposes.

We are duty-bound to act and to unite our efforts, because the persistence of this conflict is also affecting neighbouring countries, where hundreds of thousands of unfortunate people have sought refuge, and it is imperilling peace in this part of the world. This is why our delegation considers that we must spare nothing that might lead to a cessation of hostilities and to a ceasefire — of which the demilitarization of Kabul would be a major element.

In this connection we are pleased to note the special attention that the Secretary-General himself is giving to the conflict. We support all of his initiatives to find a lasting solution. We are gratified by the progress that has been made by the United Nations Special Mission in Afghanistan, whose staff deserves our admiration, thanks and support, in the light of the many risks that these people daily confront in carrying out their noble work.

To be useful, the discussion in the Security Council on the situation in Afghanistan must provide a framework for dialogue which takes into account the stakes involved for each of the parties, as well as the opinions of all of them. It should encourage the articulation of a collective approach — the only means of achieving peace.

The international community, and the countries in the region in particular, must do their utmost to convince the Afghan factions that it is necessary to stop fighting and to commit themselves to negotiations without further delay. The neighbouring countries of Afghanistan, by exercising a stabilizing influence on the protagonists, can and must play a decisive role in the restoration of peace.

There can be no acceptable military solution, because for peace to be lasting, it must be based on national reconciliation and on the right of all factions to participate in forming a government which represents all the components of the Afghan population in its full multi-ethnic diversity.

The leaders of the Afghan factions must take their inspiration from the universal principles of democracy and promote the creation of new political, social and economic structures which will respect ethnic and demographic balance and the equality of citizens and genders. These conditions are necessary to ensure the full flowering of their people and the harmonious development of their country.

The international community would find it difficult to accept the imposition of discriminatory laws on Afghan girls and women, refusing them, in particular, the right to education and to equal pay for their work, in violation of the most elementary rights universally recognized as belonging to every human being. Nor could we accept Afghanistan becoming a breeding-ground for international terrorism or a centre for the illicit international drug trade.

Afghanistan, a country whose history and culture go back five thousand years, cannot slip into the practices of an earlier age, practices which run counter to the precepts of Islam, in which tolerance and respect for others are high priorities. This country — which provided the chosen pass for the old Silk Road and whose fabulous mountains have witnessed some of the greatest figures of history: Darius I, Alexander the Great, Genghis Khan,

just to mention a few — cannot sink into obscurantism, rejecting all ideas of progress or of belonging to a modern and independent world.

Afghanistan deserves to resume its rightful place in the concert of nations. My delegation is pleased that the Secretary-General has called for the convening of a second meeting, on 16 April, to bring together the countries concerned about the Afghan crisis. We hope that the participants in that meeting will be able to study all the ways to promote intra-Afghan discussions in order to put an end to the hostilities, as well as ways of implementing the recommendations of the International Forum on Assistance to Afghanistan held last January at Ashgabat.

In conclusion, the situation in Afghanistan remains of concern to the international community as a whole. The United Nations must continue to play its central and irreplaceable role in the search for a peaceful solution to the conflict, because we obviously cannot accept the feasibility of a military option. The Security Council must take steps to that end by ensuring that all the parties involved will fully participate in negotiations on national reconciliation and the formation of a broadly representative Government. In this connection, the countries of the region should be encouraged to do their utmost to halt the flow of weapons to Afghanistan and be called upon to cooperate with the United Nations Special Mission and to refrain from any interference that might impede rapprochement between the factions. The Afghan leaders, for their part, must commit themselves before the international community to halting drug trafficking and to ensuring that their country does not spawn international terrorism. It is our duty to guarantee the security of the personnel of humanitarian organizations and to make sure that no barriers prevent those men and women from delivering the necessary humanitarian assistance to the needy populations. Girls and women in Afghanistan must not be subjected to discriminatory laws, which, as we have already stated, violate their fundamental rights and contribute to delaying economic and social progress in the country.

Guinea-Bissau hopes that the Security Council will take into account the opinions expressed by all delegations in the debate on the question of Afghanistan and will give clear expression to an agreed position that will promote the building of peace in that country, whose population has suffered all too much and deserves our continued attention and all the humanitarian assistance it requires.

Mr. Dejammet (France) (*interpretation from French*): The Security Council, in resolution 1076 (1996), and the General Assembly, in resolution 51/195, expressed the fundamental principles for a settlement to the conflict in Afghanistan: the Afghan parties must put an end to hostilities and engage in political dialogue; foreign interference, in particular in the form of supplying weapons, must cease; and the United Nations has a central role to play in the settlement of the conflict, first and foremost, through the action of the Special Mission to Afghanistan.

The latest report of the Secretary-General refers to the tireless efforts of the United Nations Special Mission to achieve a ceasefire. It also points out that humanitarian assistance has continued in often difficult conditions. We must pay tribute to these efforts, and France, in this context, would like to thank all those who assisted us in the release of the two French representatives of a non-governmental organization who were imprisoned in Kabul for a month.

The situation described by the Secretary-General shows, however, that little progress has been made in the implementation of the principles expressed in the resolutions of the United Nations. We note, as does the Secretary-General, that the warring factions have not heeded the repeated appeals for peace and appear determined to pursue the military option. The Secretary-General indicates that it is widely believed that foreign interference is continuing. The humanitarian situation is characterized by persistent discrimination against women, displacement of populations and mistreatment of the personnel of humanitarian organizations.

This situation should not lead to discouragement or indifference. The new initiatives announced by the Secretary-General deserve our support. In particular, we welcome with satisfaction the convening of a new meeting of concerned countries, and we are in favour of holding such meetings more regularly. In addition, we support the idea of greater involvement by the Security Council.

We reaffirm our full support for the efforts of the special representative of the Secretary-General aimed at a resumption of dialogue. We hope that the special representative will be able to extend his contacts to influential individuals in Afghanistan and influential Afghans abroad. Mr. Holl's regular and close contacts with all of the States that have influence, first and foremost the States of the region, will also be extremely useful. Cooperation with the Organization of the Islamic Conference should also finally bear fruit.

The action of the Secretary-General and his special representative, however, can only yield results if all Member States adopt an attitude consistent with the principles expressed by the United Nations.

We share the wish expressed by the Secretary-General to see States interested in Afghanistan, and that have an influence on that country, coordinate their activities with those of the Special Mission and not favour any of the parties to the detriment of another.

The cessation of interference is indispensable, in particular the supply of weapons. Those States that interfere in this way bear particular responsibility for the continuation of this conflict. I wish to recall that France, like its partners in the European Union, is applying a full embargo on the supply of weapons.

The continuation of the conflict in Afghanistan has prolonged the suffering of the Afghan people. This conflict may result in the destabilization of the region, and it also has adverse consequences for the entire international community. We need only recall in this regard that many terrorists, including some of the most dangerous ones, are at this very moment sheltered in Afghanistan.

A settlement of this conflict can therefore be possible only if the Afghan parties agree to cease hostilities and engage in dialogue. We must reiterate our appeals along these lines. Let us see to it that the Afghan parties fully understand that these appeals reflect the unanimous will of the international community and therefore of the Security Council.

Mr. Matuszewski (Poland): As my delegation associates itself with the statement to be made by the representative of the Netherlands on behalf of the European Union, I will take the liberty of emphasizing only certain elements of my country's position with regard to the situation in Afghanistan.

The delegation of Poland continues to hold the view that the Afghan crisis constitutes a serious threat to international peace and security and, in particular, to stability in the region of Central Asia. The perennial lack of normalization in Afghanistan is the source of tensions which persist around its perimeter. The continuation by the warring parties of their attempts to resolve the conflict by military means only perpetuates the present ordeal and aggravates the catastrophic humanitarian situation of the civilian population in Afghanistan. It may ultimately threaten the sovereignty, territorial integrity and unity of Afghanistan, with all the ensuing consequences for the whole region.

As on previous occasions, the Polish delegation expresses its strong belief that only genuine national reconciliation and respect for the interests of all ethnic and religious population groups in Afghanistan, as well as the long-standing tradition of Afghan statehood, can provide a true basis for a peaceful settlement of the conflict. The warring factions in Afghanistan should finally acknowledge the fact that their country is the common heritage of all Afghans and that the development and reconstruction of Afghanistan can be enhanced only through the participation of all ethnic groups and political factions in the affairs of the country.

We reaffirm our view that the parties concerned throughout Afghanistan should respect the human rights of their people and should demonstrate tolerance and moderation in the exercise of control, in all its dimensions, over the various parts of the Afghan territory. Humanitarian problems and human rights abuses resulting from the protracted armed struggle among the parties constitute an additional destabilizing factor in the overall situation in Afghanistan. Persistent unrest and upheavals in Afghanistan bring about the continual displacement of an increasing number of people in various areas of the country. The deterioration of the social and economic status of women in Afghanistan, in particular with regard to their restricted access to education and employment, which contravenes the provisions of relevant international instruments, remains a source of deep concern.

A political settlement and peace in Afghanistan can have real impact on the humanitarian situation of civilians, who bear the brunt of the conflict, as well as on the results of the humanitarian work undertaken by aid agencies. It is commendable that, in spite of continued instability and ongoing hostilities, humanitarian activities are being carried out by United Nations agencies and non-governmental organizations throughout Afghanistan. It is also encouraging that as a follow-up to the International Forum on Assistance to Afghanistan, convened in January 1997 at Ashgabat, efforts are currently under way to develop a strategic framework which will address immediate relief as well as the longer-term rehabilitation and development needs of Afghanistan. Yet it must be stressed again that the cessation of armed hostilities and political stability in Afghanistan are indispensable if reconstruction measures are to have a lasting effect.

The Polish delegation is still of the opinion that the United Nations has an important role to play in bringing about the end of the civil war in Afghanistan and in achieving a peaceful settlement of the Afghan conflict. In our view, the fundamental role of the United Nations Special Mission to Afghanistan in assisting the Afghan parties to negotiate a broad-based settlement cannot be overestimated. We fully support the diplomatic efforts of Mr. Norbert Holl, the special representative of the Secretary-General in Afghanistan, to bring the parties together to negotiate a cease-fire and initiate genuine political dialogue leading to the creation of a fully representative mechanism for national reconciliation. We are also encouraged that the great majority of Afghans want the United Nations to play a central role in the search for a peaceful solution.

Unfortunately, in recent months, just as before, the United Nations peace effort has been making little progress, as the Afghan warring factions have remained intransigent and have not heeded the repeated appeals for a negotiated settlement, continuously pursuing military options without regard for the suffering of the civilian population.

The military situation remains precariously volatile and, according to the Secretary-General's latest report on Afghanistan (S/1997/240), it may soon deteriorate further with the onset of the spring thaw. In view of the grave consequences of a possible intensification of military confrontation, the Polish delegation shares the view expressed by the Secretary-General in his report that it is necessary to increase and coordinate international efforts to impress upon the Afghan parties the need to solve the conflict in a peaceful way, that is to arrive at a lasting political settlement with the participation of all segments of Afghan society.

It must be reaffirmed today that, without the political will of the parties, an end to the Afghan civil war and the implementation of a comprehensive peaceful settlement as outlined in relevant United Nations resolutions, will remain unattainable.

The Polish delegation is seriously concerned at the prospect of continuing military hostilities in Afghanistan. We reaffirm our conviction that the cessation of foreign interference in the internal affairs of Afghanistan through the supply of arms and military equipment to the warring factions is one of the principal conditions of a resolution of the armed conflict in that country.

We are of the view that the international community should persist in expressing its strong commitment to the sovereignty, independence, territorial integrity and national unity of Afghanistan. This sentiment was reflected in the last Security Council resolution on Afghanistan and it also needs to be reaffirmed today.

Allow me reiterate our position on the necessity for a negotiated settlement of the Afghan crisis. We underline the importance of implementing the principles enunciated in the relevant United Nations resolutions in this regard, bearing in mind the right of the Afghan people to determine their own destiny.

In conclusion, we wish to call upon all States, and especially those with influence in the region, to assist the people of Afghanistan in searching for a peaceful future for their country in coordination with the activities of the United Nations Special Mission in Afghanistan.

Mr. Somavía (Chile) (*interpretation from Spanish*): We would like today to express our appreciation and full support for the active work carried out in recent months by the Head of the United Nations Special Mission to Afghanistan, Mr. Norbert Holl, and by his entire team representing the Secretary-General. They have the difficult and complex task of trying to turn the international community's aspirations for peace into concrete fact on the ground. We congratulate them on their determination and we understand the obstacles they face.

My delegation attaches great importance to the series of meetings of the Intra-Afghan Working Group, in which representatives of the Taliban and the Supreme Council for the Defence of Afghanistan participated for the first time. We think that it is necessary that a concrete plan should be established as soon as possible as a result of these meetings to allow for the formation of a broad-based government in which all sectors are represented.

Similarly, the meeting at which broad consultations were held among some interested States by the Secretary-General at Headquarters last November was another important event. We consider it to be very positive that such consultations will continue at the meeting scheduled for this week.

We would also like to reiterate our belief that it is only through negotiations and political dialogue that a lasting solution can be found to this long-running conflict.

Agreement on a lasting cease-fire is essential as an immediate preliminary task in order to create conditions which will make it possible for there to be progress in the peace negotiations. However, this is not happening. The leaders are not agreeing. It is always painful to note the indifference of leaders at the suffering of their own followers and the peoples that they claim to represent in the conflicts before the Security Council. We are again encountering this situation in Afghanistan. The conflict continues and is deepening, to the cost of the most unprotected. It is always the leaders who suffer the least. It is always the leaders who escape shortages. Hardly ever are their lives at risk.

This Council and the Secretary-General's team have made wise proposals that provide a foundation for a peaceful political solution to the conflict. We urge the leaders to move ahead in this direction.

Those who continue to prefer a military solution to the conflict are deceiving themselves, and this will do nothing but prolong the suffering of their own people. Worse yet, it would appear that the parties are getting ready to resume armed operations of greater magnitude once the winter snows have melted. They are preparing for a violent spring. We, like others, would like to see a springtime of peace.

However, this recourse to arms is occurring in part because the international community, despite all its speeches and treaties, continues to recognize the use of force as a source of international legitimacy. For example, and very sadly, it would not seem strange to anyone that if one of the factions were finally able to prevail by force and conquer all Afghan territory, its delegate would then represent Afghanistan at the United Nations.

If this is contemporary political reality, it should come as no surprise that the factions are reluctant to negotiate and seek peaceful solutions. They all know that military victory would be more advantageous domestically than a negotiated peace. Today, either solution is equally acceptable to the international community. There is no incentive from the international community to choose a political solution over one imposed by force.

This being the case, a military victory makes it easier to consolidate domestic power and cause no loss of international recognition. The current state of law and international relations seems, therefore, to be either an implicit or an indirect stimulus to solutions by force, except for the possible use of sanctions, the effectiveness of which is very questionable.

This perverse logic results, moreover, in increased internationalization of conflicts, because in today's world no faction gets involved in a civil war without external support. This is certainly the situation in Afghanistan.

We are sorry to have to reiterate today the concerns that were already expressed by my delegation on previous occasions in connection with continued foreign interference in internal Afghan affairs. We hope that in the future this reality will not impede the negotiating process and will not make it more difficult for the good offices and constructive dialogue encouraged by the United Nations to be successful.

The supply of arms to the factions and the utilization of Afghan territory for illicit activities such as terrorism and drug trafficking are very negative manifestations of such interference. This situation points up the urgency of putting an end to interference. We appeal to all the countries involved to cooperate with the United Nations to ensure that the Afghan crisis will not spread and threaten stability in the region.

While we firmly encourage the continuation of political activities aimed at achieving peace, we cannot hide our concern about the humanitarian problems that still persist. We reiterate the objections that we have raised about the trampling of human rights, whether they be caused by the Taliban or by any other Afghan group. Nothing justifies the restrictions on the access of women to education and employment. We also encourage the factions to take measures without delay that will make it possible for refugees and displaced persons to return to their communities of origin. We know very well that respect for the various ethnic and religious groups is an indispensable basis for peace.

Allow me to address specifically the situation of women, and particularly in the territories occupied by the Taliban. First and foremost, I wish to point out that this is not merely an obsession of some sectors of the Western press. It is a real and deep concern of a significant number of Member States of the United Nations, as was clearly demonstrated in last week's discussions in the Commission on Human Rights in Geneva. The same holds for many sectors of civil society.

For his part, Mr. Choong Hyun Paik, Special Rapporteur on Human Rights for Afghanistan, reported to the Commission on Human Rights that the Taliban policy has resulted in serious violations of human rights, particularly those of women, who have been prohibited from working or attending school. The Special Rapporteur has reported that they have been severely beaten with various objects, such as car antennas, chains and hoses, for not complying with the dress code that has been imposed.

Paragraph 73 of the Special Rapporteur's report indicates that prohibition against women working has had a significant impact on the work of United Nations agencies and non-governmental organizations that employ a large number of women. He draws attention in paragraph 82 of his report to the feminization of poverty, which results from the current marginalization of women.

Those of us who do not profess the Islamic faith, but have great respect for it, cannot understand how this deplorable treatment of women can be justified by religious reasons. There are many Muslim countries that follow different policies. We should also like to emphasize that there is an international system for protection of human rights, which must be respected. The 1993 Vienna World Conference on Human Rights made it clear that the rights of women are human rights. Accordingly, we would like these practices to be re-examined.

The Government of Chile considers that the recommendations to overcome this situation contained in the report of the Special Rapporteur should be put into practice, particularly the appeal for the United Nations to speak with one unified voice on all questions of gender equality.

But why am I talking at such great length about women in a Security Council debate? Because Chile and many other countries in the world do not want to see the rights of women sacrificed on the altar of peace. This is what we wish to prevent by calling attention to the matter today. We do not want this Council, or the United Nations, to look the other way if a political agreement is achieved that would allow women to be subjected to the practices that we are condemning today. This is not a matter we consider negotiable for the sake of a political agreement.

Peace is not only the end of hostilities and a stable distribution of political power. Peace is also a society living in peace, where all citizens can enjoy their fundamental human rights and feel safe in their lives, customs and property.

In conclusion, we would like to express our sincere appreciation to the humanitarian-assistance organizations for their valuable work. We would also like firmly to reject and condemn those who have tried to prevent them from doing their work now and in the past.

Finally, we appeal to all the leaders of the Afghan factions to cooperate in good faith pragmatically and flexibly with the Special Mission and to support the initiatives urged by the United Nations to put an end to this fratricidal war and to inaugurate without delay an era of peace and reconstruction for good of their people.

Mr. Choi (Republic of Korea): Afghanistan has been engulfed in internal armed conflict for more than 17 years. Those long years have exacted a heavy toll in innocent civilian casualties and untold human suffering, and have devastated the nation's physical infrastructure. The conflict has been made worse by clashing religious convictions, ethnic divisions and outside interference. Despite strenuous diplomatic efforts, in particular by the Secretary-General and his special representative, Mr. Nobert Holl, to broker a ceasefire and engage the warring parties in a peace process, the fighting has been raging unabated, with even greater intensity in recent months. Peace in Afghanistan remains as elusive as ever.

The Republic of Korea deplores the continuing bloodshed, and calls for an immediate end to the hostilities. The dire humanitarian situation is a matter of grave concern for all of us. We also share deep concern over the ongoing human rights violations attributable to the religious intolerance of the Taliban, including their discrimination against women.

After almost two decades of armed conflict, the Afghan parties must realize that a military solution to their differences is impossible and that there is no alternative to a negotiated political settlement. It is time to spare the Afghan people the misery and suffering that the fighting has brought upon them.

Having said that, my delegation wishes to outline three principles upon which we believe a political settlement of the Afghan conflict should be based.

First, any political settlement of the conflict should involve an immediate ceasefire, the demilitarization of Kabul and the establishment of a broad-based transitional Government of national unity and reconciliation. Secondly, the unity, territorial integrity and sovereignty of Afghanistan, and the inviolability of its borders,

should be fully respected by all States. Outside interference, including the open flow of arms to the parties, undermines peace efforts and only adds to the complexity and intractability of the conflict. We therefore believe that an arms embargo is in order if the peace process is to have any chance of success. Thirdly, the political and military realities on the ground should be duly taken into account in working out a comprehensive political settlement by actively engaging the parties concerned.

We believe that the United Nations and the international community as a whole can do several things to facilitate a settlement on the basis that I have just outlined. While international initiatives to achieve a political settlement of the conflict should be welcomed, particular importance should be attached to the central role and responsibility of the United Nations in trying to achieve a just and lasting settlement. Previous experience has shown that the number of diplomatic initiatives and peace brokers involved in a conflict is not necessarily proportionate to the speed or chances of that conflict's resolution. This is especially true if such additional efforts are not well coordinated with those of the Secretary-General or his special representative. In the case of Afghanistan, impartiality and international credibility are the most badly needed assets in brokering peace, and no other player can compete with the United Nations on this score.

We also attach great importance to the coordination of all activities of United Nations agencies in Afghanistan by the United Nations Special Mission to Afghanistan. Furthermore, the Afghan warring parties, in particular the Taliban, must be reminded of the need to commit themselves to preventing the areas under their control from being used for the training and sheltering of terrorists. In the same vein, they should also prevent drug trafficking in the territories they control.

Finally, it must be emphasized that the international community's efforts towards a lasting and comprehensive political settlement can succeed only when the Afghan parties themselves demonstrate the political will to resolve their differences through dialogue. The ultimate responsibility for the destiny of Afghanistan lies, after all, in the hands of the Afghan people and their leaders. We earnestly hope that this spring will truly breed lilacs out of the dead land and not bring a new flash of gun barrels.

Mr. Mahugu (Kenya): My delegation takes this opportunity to thank the Secretary-General for his report contained in document S/1997/240, dated 16 March 1997, on the worrying situation in Afghanistan, which constitutes a threat to international peace and security.

I would like to begin my remarks today by stating six principles which will guide Kenya's assessment of the situation in Afghanistan. First, the sovereignty and territorial integrity of Afghanistan are paramount. Secondly, non-interference in the internal affairs of other countries must be maintained. Thirdly, the peaceful settlement of disputes through negotiation is cherished by all of us. Fourthly, equal rights and equal opportunity for all, including women, must be upheld. Fifthly, the right of the Afghan people to determine their own destiny is a prerequisite that is not only enshrined in international law but also a normal moral and political obligation. Sixthly, the United Nations must continue to play the central role in mediating the conflict and coordinating the peace process.

We are particularly concerned about reports of renewed fighting in Afghanistan, which has caused further significant displacement of civilians, forcing them to live under the most demeaning and intolerable conditions. This upheaval exacerbates an already fragile political and humanitarian situation. We are encouraged that international humanitarian organizations, such as the International Committee of the Red Cross, are mobilizing more resources to cope with this crisis, and we commend their cooperation with the Afghan Red Crescent, which now directly helps nearly half a million people throughout Afghanistan. My delegation also strongly supports the appeal for financial and material assistance to ameliorate the effects of the conflict, and encourages donor nations to assist quickly. In addition to the threats to international peace and security, it is this alarm over the precarious humanitarian situation, in particular that of suffering children, which motivated Kenya to support concrete corrective measures initiated by the Security Council. We will continue to support all other efforts geared towards addressing these problems. In this regard, my delegation supports the Non-Aligned Movement's declaration on this subject following the New Delhi meeting, and is ready to work with other delegations to come up with suitable action following the meeting.

We note with apprehension that, as the Taliban are in almost total military control of Afghanistan, they clearly lack an incentive to concede anything in any negotiations. Given their current military advantage, we are not very optimistic that the Taliban will heed calls for a ceasefire and commence meaningful negotiations with the Supreme Council for the Defence of Afghanistan

(SCDA). Indeed, this obvious military advantage has, in the view of my delegation, made it almost impossible for the United Nations Special Mission to Afghanistan to obtain any meaningful concessions from the Taliban or to report substantive progress in negotiations for a ceasefire and the future of Afghanistan. My delegation does not believe that a fresh spring offensive by the Taliban is a gesture of peace or a signal confirming their willingness to discuss the future of the country with anyone else. If anything, it is a clear attempt to solidify their military gains and effectively extend their hegemony throughout the country. This is not the action of an entity willing to negotiate. We think, however, that total military success on their part will not result in a complete political solution of the crisis. Indeed, it will heighten the need for them to sit down and seriously negotiate with the SCDA alliance. We hear encouraging news that General Dostum of the alliance is now ready to meet Mullah Gawooz, the Taliban Minister, and hope that they will do so soon in an appropriate neutral location. We only hope that the impact of a renewed offensive will be softened by the concerted activities of humanitarian agencies.

It is obvious to any student of history that, unfortunately, sustained conflict of this nature is in most cases supported and encouraged from outside. Afghanistan is no different. There are credible reports of continued material and financial support to both the Taliban and the SCDA Alliance; this aggravates the already volatile situation and increases the great need for a resolution of the conflict. To their supporters we say: there are no winners. There have never been winners in such conflicts. We strongly urge all external meddlers to assist in de-escalating the conflict by immediately stopping the reported supply of weapons and military personnel. Indeed, we support the primacy and urgency of this call, as contained also in the Non-Aligned Movement's final declaration on this issue, dated 8 April 1997, in which the Movement's Foreign Ministers

> "called upon all States to strictly refrain from any outside interference in the internal affairs of Afghanistan, including the involvement of foreign military personnel and the supply of arms to various parties".

Further reports of private oil companies colluding with foreign intelligence agencies on the side of one party to the conflict muddies the water even further. We urge them to stop interfering and to conduct their business in an ethical manner. Nothing can justify such actions, if these are proven to be true.

My delegation is also very concerned about allegations that one of the parties runs terrorist-training camps and that parties to the conflict are involved in the growing and distribution of opium and its derivatives. We think these two evils, drug trafficking and terrorism, are global threats that must be addressed under the auspices of the relevant international instruments designed to combat them, and we urge those involved to refrain from engaging in them.

As the search for peace continues, the role of countries with influence over the parties to the conflict becomes even more important. Being close to the situation, they have better insights into the problem and a detailed understanding of how to proceed. My delegation is therefore encouraged by their unrelenting efforts to arrive at a meaningful solution to the crisis, especially with specific reference to the Istanbul meeting of 5 January, the Tehran meeting of 25 and 26 January and the Tashkent meeting of 24 and 25 February 1997. While the impact of these meetings is not easy to gauge, the primacy and validity of engagement cannot be emphasized enough.

However, we are quite concerned that some of these countries with influence continue supporting one party against the others. This fans the flames of violence, and my delegation strongly supports the Secretary-General's call urging them to refrain from these unhelpful activities. In addition, their efforts need to be coordinated, and this can be done only through the United Nations Special Mission to Afghanistan.

In this vein and at this juncture, let me on behalf of the Kenya delegation commend Mr. Holl, the Head of the United Nations Special Mission to Afghanistan, and his team for performing well under difficult circumstances. We are still hopeful that his efforts, spearheaded by the Secretary-General, will eventually bear fruit, and we encourage him to continue vigorously engaging the parties to the conflict. We concur with the Secretary-General's view that a negotiated settlement under the auspices of the United Nations is the only solution to the conflict, and we encourage him to convene an intra-Afghan meeting of the parties when conditions are suitable.

I cannot end my intervention without revisiting the unsettling humanitarian aspects of this crisis. On another occasion, regarding this same matter, my delegation had the opportunity to point out that the precarious human rights predicament of women and girls in Afghanistan

cried out for urgent attention. These concerns have not been alleviated. In fact, the plight of women and girls does not seem to have improved, although we understand that there are some pockets of hope in Khost and other parts of Taliban-controlled territory. The right to education and employment has been denied to them, especially in a situation where the war has made thousands of women widows and therefore the sole breadwinners in their families. Denying them employment, however well-justified on the basis of any principle or religion, is condemning them to destitution. We urge those nations with any influence in this matter to address it most expeditiously.

On 21 and 22 January 1997, an International Forum on Assistance to Afghanistan was held at Ashgabat under the auspices of the Department of Humanitarian Affairs and in cooperation with the United Nations Development Programme. During this meeting important information and ideas were shared on the future humanitarian and development requirements of Afghanistan. We understand that more work is being done by the Department to develop a strategic framework that will address immediate relief issues, as well as long-term development needs and rehabilitation in the country. My delegation believes that the post-conflict reconstruction of Afghanistan is a critical piece in the jigsaw puzzle of the evolving situation.

We think, however, that concrete plans or actions should not be laid on the table only after a resolution of the conflict, but should be addressed in tandem with the ongoing search for a political solution to the crisis. This approach may in fact galvanize internal support for the overall peace process and can be used as a tool in the ongoing United Nations mediation efforts. This approach is also relevant in the context of the need to broaden the base of political dialogue to include the millions of Afghans living outside Afghanistan who have a stake and therefore a voice in the future of their country.

We cannot encourage or allow the creation of an environment that precipitates any form of forced displacement, giving rise to "ethnic cleansing". We have to speak out loudly against this now, instead of later when more people will have been displaced and more lives lost. The unhappy lessons of Rwanda in 1994 and now Burundi with the policy of *regroupement*, teach us that quick, resolute action is critical if tragedy along these lines is to be averted. We therefore note with hope the assurance given by Mullah Rabbani to the Special Mission that the displaced male Tajik farmers will be allowed to go back to their farms to tend their crops and that their eventual complete return will be honoured.

Finally, the Kenyan delegation completely supports Security Council resolution 1076 (1996) of 22 October 1996 in all its provisions, especially those that rightfully place the United Nations in a positive coordinating position, which enables it to play a central role in the mediation effort. We think that while the efforts of interested parties are important, their efforts must be closely coordinated in order to achieve the best results.

Mr. Owada (Japan): Japan believes that maintaining the territorial integrity and unity of Afghanistan as a stable sovereign State is important for the peace and stability not only of that subcontinent region of Asia, but also of the broader Asian regions adjoining it. It should also be noted that the hostilities in Afghanistan are hampering efforts to tackle such vital problems as the control of drug trafficking and international terrorism. As an Asian nation, we in Japan are gravely concerned about the continuing and worsening armed conflict in that country, and attach great importance to its early and peaceful resolution.

It is against this background that Japan has continued and will continue to support the United Nations, which occupies the central role in international efforts toward this end. We particularly support and greatly appreciate the effort of the United Nations Special Mission to Afghanistan, led by Mr. Norbert Holl, to achieve the end.

Despite those efforts of the Mission, however, the situation remains very serious. It should be made clear to all the parties that an attempt to resolve the conflict by military means will not bring about durable peace in that country; rather it will jeopardize the chance of a peace based on national reconciliation, harm relations with neighbouring countries and make enduring unity more difficult.

All factions should be brought to agree to an immediate ceasefire and begin negotiations on the establishment of a national unity government.

Neighbouring countries should refrain from exercising their influence on the factions involved to exacerbate the situation and instead cooperate in a constructive manner with the United Nations in its mediation activities through the United Nations Special Mission to Afghanistan.

As an Asian nation that should offer its own share of contributions in our common task of restoring peace in

Afghanistan, Japan is keenly conscious of its responsibility to contribute to the peace process in Afghanistan, in keeping with the views I have just outlined. I wish to mention here, in particular, three areas where Japan wishes to offer its contribution.

First, as I stated in this Council Chamber on 16 October 1996, Japan would be prepared to consider offering a venue for a meeting between the parties directly involved, in close cooperation with the United Nations, if and when such an offer could assist in bringing the parties to the negotiating table. We in Japan believe that, as an impartial third party to the conflict in Afghanistan, Japan has a role to play in complementing the activities of the United Nations Special Mission, through inducing the parties in conflict to agree on a ceasefire. Japan is looking forward to the ripening of an opportunity for such a meeting. Japan hopes to be able, when the time is ripe, to provide a forum in which all parties will be able to participate and engage in direct negotiations.

Secondly, in line with this perspective, Japan is engaged in assisting the efforts of the Special Mission, which is endeavouring to promote direct contacts and dialogue between the four major parties: the Dostum, Rabbani, Khalili and Taliban factions. Thus, for example, to those parties which had accepted an invitation — namely, Dostum, Rabbani and Khalili — an opportunity was provided recently in Tokyo for useful preliminary contacts. There Japan explained what it had in mind in the way of contributing to a settlement of the Afghan conflict and urged the parties to cooperate with the United Nations mediation efforts and to start substantive discussions on an immediate ceasefire and a peaceful settlement. Japan is considering making a similar démarche for the Taliban as well.

Thirdly, with regard to assistance to Afghanistan, humanitarian assistance by international organizations and non-governmental organizations should continue in order to expedite the return of refugees to a relatively stable area, depending upon their situation. In the view of my delegation, however, what is equally important, if not more important, will be to start the process of economic cooperation and national reconstruction in an integrated way, together with the efforts for achieving political reconciliation and national unity.

As I also stated last October in this Council Chamber, we should start examining what the possibilities are for offering a hand of help and support to the Afghan parties in their reconstruction and rehabilitation in the context of our endeavours for a peaceful settlement, without waiting for the attainment of a final peace. For this purpose, my country is interested in cooperating with the United Nations, when the time is judged to be right, in the promotion of an international conference in which the problem of post-conflict reconstruction will be examined as a central theme on the agenda for peace in Afghanistan. With this possibility in mind, my Government will be participating in the meeting of the Afghanistan Support Group, to be held in Geneva on 21 April, which will provide an opportunity for exploring the possibilities of such an integrated approach for peace and reconstruction.

An open debate on Afghanistan in the Security Council can achieve the important purpose of opening up a new vista for peace, by means of a number of new ideas focusing the attention of the international community on this conflict-ridden country and offering new, innovative approaches to peace in that region. My delegation hopes that this open debate of the Security Council will succeed not only in drawing the attention of the international community to the dire situation in this often forgotten area of human tragedy, but also in generating new impetus towards attaining durable peace in Afghanistan.

Mr. Gnehm (United States of America): Since this Council last discussed Afghanistan in October, the Taliban have advanced north of Kabul and into central Afghanistan in an effort to push aside their rivals, General Dostum and Commander Massoud. These military moves towards the northern border and the Taliban's extremely conservative social policies greatly alarmed Afghanistan's neighbours. Observers vary on whether the Taliban can prevail over Dostum and Massoud and succeed in taking over the north, but this remains a possibility.

The United States Government has repeatedly urged an end to the fighting and urged a practical dialogue in the spirit of compromise. We have also encouraged others to make this key point, in particular to the Taliban: stability cannot be achieved if one group tries to rule all Afghanistan on its own. All groups must work towards a broadly representative government acceptable to all Afghans.

Let me take this occasion to respond to disinformation that the United States has given support to the Taliban. We do not support the Taliban or any other group. But neither do we put blame on the Taliban for

the ills of Afghanistan, for which all parties are responsible. We have repeatedly and clearly conveyed to parties our deep concerns on terrorist/militant training camps, on narcotics production and trafficking and on human rights, particularly the rights of women and girls. We have reminded the Taliban that it is their responsibility to reassure their neighbours that they have no intention of challenging their territorial integrity or exporting Taliban ideology.

In our view, this Council should remain concerned about the unrelenting flow of weapons and equipment to the warring parties by outside powers, despite the disclaimers we hear from all. So to all those engaged in such resupply, the members of this Council should have only this to say: "You are undermining the cause of peace in Afghanistan and perpetuating the conflict. And, ironically, your efforts are unlikely to change the outcome."

The Head of United Nations Special Mission to Afghanistan, Mr. Norbert Holl, has worked tirelessly to persuade the warring groups to sit down together and discuss the parameters of a peace. The United States Government commends the enormous efforts and dedication of Mr. Holl and his staff in what must seem to be a thankless and unproductive task. We stand fully behind the United Nations Special Mission. We believe it could succeed in launching a true political process if the Afghan groups were willing to negotiate in good faith.

Many Afghans openly express their hopes and aspirations for their country. They long for peace and security and a government that will restore the economy, the infrastructure and their livelihoods. Much of the populace has accepted Taliban rule — not, I would say, because they want a severe judicial regime or social and religious restrictions imposed on all, but because they are desperate for peace and a semblance of normal life. The Taliban have brought a modicum of peace to much of Afghanistan, but at a real price.

In our view, the Afghan people should not be faced with a stark choice between security with political constraints and social intolerance, and no security at all. The voices of those who want all their fellow Afghans to have a role in selecting their leaders and in determining the social practices for their communities deserve to be heard. The United Nations and our individual Governments should do all we can to ensure that this silent majority has a voice.

Mr. Sáenz Biolley (Costa Rica) (*interpretation from Spanish*): My delegation is pleased to be able to speak in this debate on the situation in Afghanistan.

I should like to begin by saying that Costa Rica gives its unqualified support to the efforts of the United Nations Special Mission to Afghanistan to achieve a peaceful negotiated solution to the conflict afflicting that country.

In particular, my delegation supports the efforts of Mr. Holl, the Head of the Special Mission, to begin direct high-level talks between the various parties to the conflict by means of a political meeting. My delegation urges the parties, the Supreme Council for the Defence of Afghanistan and the Taliban, to participate in them actively and in good faith. My delegation is pleased by reports that the three leaders of the factions of the Supreme Council — General Dostum, Commander Massoud and Mr. Khalili — are willing to take part personally in the talks. Costa Rica urges the political leader of the Taliban, Mr. Mullah Rabbani, to participate personally in the meeting.

Costa Rica realizes that it is necessary to promote negotiations among the parties to the conflict, and considers that the sponsorship of the United Nations is indispensable in that regard, as is the friendly pressure of the States that have influence over them. Either by means of a group of friendly countries or by means of an international conference, it is necessary to focus the pressure of the international community on the parties to the conflict to lead them to accept a peaceful negotiated solution to the conflict. This might be a way to enable Afghanistan to return to the path of peace, respect for human rights and democracy. This would put an end to the constant frustrations that have to date characterized the situation in Afghanistan.

My delegation would also like to reiterate the obligation of the parties to the conflict to respect international humanitarian law customarily applied to internal armed conflicts and to respect the human rights of civilians in areas under military control. The human rights of women and children are of particular concern for Costa Rica. They deserve preferential treatment, and any acts of discrimination against them, such as those that have been reported, deserve the unanimous condemnation of the international community. In this connection, the parties to the conflict must be aware that as long as they continue to perpetrate such acts, they will be politically rejected by the international community.

My delegation would also like to express its concern about the situation of refugees and displaced persons. In this connection, we appreciate the humanitarian work of the United Nations agencies, the International Committee of the Red Cross and other non-governmental organizations. My delegation must express its concern about the activities of some of the parties to the conflict, which are undermining the activities of those organizations by impeding their work or detaining their staff.

Costa Rica is also deeply concerned about the transfer of arms and explosive materials, both to Afghanistan and through it to third States. In this connection, my delegation appeals to States that have influence on the parties to halt this flow of arms and to stress to them the need to reach a peaceful solution. Costa Rica is also concerned about the transfer of drugs, as well as of artistic and cultural treasures that are the patrimony not only of the Afghan people but of humanity out of the territory of Afghanistan in order to finance military efforts. This trade is not only illegal but immoral.

Mr. Osvald (Sweden): Later in the debate, the Netherlands will speak on behalf of the European Union. We, of course, stand fully behind that statement.

While the people of Afghanistan has now endured 18 years of war, there are no indications that the warring parties will heed repeated international appeals for peace and a negotiated settlement. On the contrary, there are reports that the fighting could intensify when spring arrives. Innocent men, women and children will continue to suffer the intolerable agonies of war.

A negotiated settlement, beginning with an immediate ceasefire and the formation of a broad-based transitional government, and ultimately followed by democratic elections, is the only acceptable road to peace in Afghanistan. Although the Afghan conflict can, in the end, be resolved only by the Afghans themselves, the international community must, in good faith, contribute to such a solution. Such a contribution should consist of the following elements.

First, outside involvement and interference in the conflict, including the continued supply of arms to the warring parties, must cease. Sweden calls on all States to strictly observe the sovereignty, independence and territorial integrity of Afghanistan, and we encourage all States to commit themselves, as the members of the European Union have done, not to deliver arms to Afghanistan.

Secondly, the United Nations is the most appropriate and credible facilitator for a political settlement between the Afghan parties. All possible support must be given to the United Nations Special Mission and the Secretary-General's special representative, Mr. Norbert Holl, in his efforts to bring about the restoration of peace, normalcy and national reconciliation in Afghanistan. It should be in the interest of all States, in the region and elsewhere, for contributions to the peace efforts to be channelled through or closely coordinated with the United Nations Special Mission to Afghanistan. Only in this way can the international community provide concerted and increased pressure on the Afghan parties to resolve the conflict peacefully, and thus promote regional stability in the long term. Competing international efforts to bring about a negotiated settlement risk being exploited by the parties.

Thirdly, the continuing violations of human rights and in particular the increasing discrimination against women and girls, are a cause of great concern. The international community must give voice to this concern and demand that these rights be respected. Human rights standards are universal and must not be dishonoured or subject to negotiation. Another source of grave concern is drug trafficking, with its far-reaching negative effects both inside and outside Afghanistan. Again, concerted international efforts are necessary to confront this dangerous threat not only to the health and well-being of individuals but also to the peaceful development of Afghanistan. Sweden is also concerned by reports of the continued use of Afghanistan as a training base for terrorist activities.

Fourthly, continued humanitarian assistance by the international community could contribute positively to the peace process, as well as to national reconciliation and rehabilitation in Afghanistan. Sweden has for many years been one of the major donors of humanitarian assistance to Afghanistan. We have worked hard to help alleviate the suffering of the people of Afghanistan and to assist in the reconstruction of that tormented nation.

Afghanistan is a country in desperate need of peace and a chance to rebuild and start anew. It is ultimately for Afghanistan itself — all its people, all its leaders — to make that decision. If it makes the right choice, I am convinced that the international community will not be found wanting in supporting Afghanistan on the road to a better future.

The President: There are a number of speakers remaining. With the concurrence of the members of the Council, I intend to suspend the meeting now.

The meeting was suspended at 6.30 p.m.

United Nations S/PV.3765 (Resumption 1)

Security Council

Fifty-second Year

Provisional

3765th Meeting
Tuesday, 15 April 1997, 4 p.m.
New York

President:	Mr. Monteiro	(Portugal)
Members:	Chile	Mr. Somavía
	China	Mr. Wang Xuexian
	Costa Rica	Mr. Sáenz Murillo
	Egypt	Mr. Elaraby
	France	Mr. Dejammet
	Guinea-Bissau	Mr. Cabral
	Japan	Mr. Takasu
	Kenya	Mr. Mahugu
	Poland	Mr. Matuszewski
	Republic of Korea	Mr. Choi
	Russian Federation	Mr. Lavrov
	Sweden	Mr. Osvald
	United Kingdom of Great Britain and Northern Ireland	Mr. Richmond
	United States of America	Mr. Wood

Agenda

The situation in Afghanistan

97-85383 (E)

This record contains the original text of speeches delivered in English and interpretations of speeches delivered in the other languages. The final text will be printed in the *Official Records of the Security Council*. Corrections should be submitted to original speeches only. They should be incorporated in a copy of the record and be sent under the signature of a member of the delegation concerned, *within one week of the date of publication*, to the Chief of the Verbatim Reporting Service, room C-178.

The meeting was resumed on Tuesday, 15 April 1997, at 4.15 p.m.

The President: I should like to inform the Council that I have received a letter from the representative of Tajikistan, in which he requests to be invited to participate in the discussion of the item on the Council's agenda. In conformity with the usual practice, I propose, with the consent of the Council, to invite that representative to participate in the discussion, without the right to vote, in accordance with the relevant provisions of the Charter and rule 37 of the Council's provisional rules of procedure.

There being no objection, it is so decided.

At the invitation of the President, Mr. Alimov (Tajikistan) took a seat at the Council table.

The President: The next speaker is the representative of the Netherlands. I invite him to take a seat at the Council table and to make his statement.

Mr. Berteling (Netherlands): I have the honour to speak on behalf of the European Union. The following associated countries have aligned themselves with this statement: Bulgaria, Cyprus, the Czech Republic, Hungary, Latvia, Lithuania, Poland, Romania, Slovakia and Slovenia. Iceland, Liechtenstein and Norway also align themselves with this statement.

For many years, the people of Afghanistan have been suffering from war, human rights violations, extortion and corruption. They are tired of the conflict and long for peace, justice and order. However, the European Union notes with deep concern the continuation and even the intensification of armed hostilities in Afghanistan. The warring factions still seem to believe in a military solution to the conflict. The European Union calls on all Afghan parties to cease the hostilities and to engage in political dialogue aimed at the establishment of a broad-based government representing the different ethnic and religious groups in the country, and at achieving national reconciliation.

Furthermore, harmful influence by countries in the region continues. In this context, the European Union wishes to reaffirm its strong commitment to the sovereignty, independence, territorial integrity and national unity of Afghanistan. The European Union strongly urges third parties to refrain from interfering in the conflict and from supplying arms to the warring factions. On 17 December 1996 the European Union established an arms embargo concerning Afghanistan, under which no European Union member State will deliver arms to any of the warring parties in that country. The associated countries have aligned themselves with this embargo. The European Union encourages all States to follow a similar policy of restraint.

The European Union encourages the States in the region to support the United Nations efforts to promote peace in Afghanistan and to use any influence they have to encourage the Afghan parties to cooperate fully with the United Nations Special Mission to Afghanistan.

The European Union reaffirms the central role of the United Nations in international efforts towards a peaceful resolution of the Afghan conflict. The European Union fully supports the efforts of the United Nations Special Mission to Afghanistan, which is uniquely placed to act as an impartial mediator in the search for peace. It calls upon all Afghan parties to cooperate with the United Nations Special Mission to achieve a negotiated and comprehensive solution. As a first step, there should be an immediate ceasefire.

The already serious situation in Afghanistan is compounded by grave and persistent human rights violations and breaches of humanitarian law. Of particular concern to the European Union is the deteriorating situation of women and girls, who are increasingly deprived of their human rights, particularly in areas controlled by the Taliban. The European Union is also concerned about the situation of displaced persons in Afghanistan, in particular those from villages north of Kabul. The European Union urgently appeals to all Afghan parties involved to respect all human rights and fundamental freedoms.

In addition, the European Union wishes to express its concern about the conditions under which international personnel and non-governmental organizations have to work in Afghanistan.

The European Union is also worried to note that the continuation of the conflict in Afghanistan increases the potential for international terrorism and drug trafficking with destabilizing effects for the region and beyond. The European Union therefore calls upon all parties in Afghanistan to halt such activities.

The European Union is actively engaged in discussions in various forums with a view to enhancing humanitarian aid and reconstruction and developing a

unitary approach by the donor community to the Afghan crisis.

As the leading contributor of humanitarian aid to Afghanistan, the European Union remains concerned about the possible repercussions of the violations of human rights on the beneficiaries of European Union, United Nations and other relief programmes in Afghanistan. It looks forward to continuing the dialogue with all the parties concerned on cooperation modalities aimed at ensuring the delivery of aid while maintaining the quality of support already provided to the people of Afghanistan, irrespective of their gender and ethnic background.

The European Union draws attention to the existence of mine-clearing programmes in Afghanistan and urges all Afghan parties to support and participate in these programmes. In this context, the European Union also appeals to the Afghan parties to put a complete halt to the use of landmines, in view of the great number of innocent people falling victim to these weapons.

In conclusion, let me reiterate the European Union's continuing commitment to support actively the United Nations in its search for and its facilitation of a resolution of the conflict in Afghanistan, which has claimed so many innocent lives.

The President: The next speaker is the representative of Turkey. I invite him to take a seat at the Council table and to make his statement.

Mr. Çelem (Turkey): At the outset, I would like to express our appreciation to Secretary-General Kofi Annan for his comprehensive, to-the-point and valuable report on the situation in Afghanistan. We concur with the observations and recommendations in his report.

Since the last meetings of the General Assembly and the Security Council on this subject and the meeting of interested countries here in New York, a considerable amount of time has passed. In this period the United Nations Special Mission to Afghanistan, headed by Mr. Holl, has made concerted efforts to make further progress in bringing together the warring parties and to achieve the urgent task of establishing a ceasefire, which could then be the basis for an improvement in the political and humanitarian situation in Afghanistan. There have also been efforts, including those of my country, in support of United Nations efforts to bring the same parties to the negotiating table to help them reach a certain common ground and thus contribute to finding a solution to the crisis.

As we understand from the Secretary-General's report, very limited progress was achieved during the Intra-Afghan Working Group meetings convened by the Special Mission. However, a notable aspect of that Working Group was that it brought together, for the first time, the Taliban and the Supreme Council for the Defence of Afghanistan.

As confirmed by the report of the Secretary-General, the political situation in Afghanistan has not improved over the past months. The humanitarian situation has even worsened. It is most unfortunate for the long-suffering people of Afghanistan that the warring factions, and in particular the Taliban, appear determined to pursue the military option. It is therefore necessary to bring the Taliban into the negotiation and reconciliation process. As has also been emphasized in the Secretary-General's report, the possibility of an increase in the military activity of the Taliban will emerge when favourable weather conditions prevail in the coming months. This is the imminent threat that we are facing.

Within the context of trying to contribute to the efforts aimed at finding a solution to the crisis in Afghanistan, the Foreign Ministers of Iran, Pakistan and Turkey met in Istanbul on 5 January 1997. The three Ministers reaffirmed their readiness and determination to give their full support to the Afghan people, in the direction of the goals set by the United Nations. Turkey also carried out contacts with each of the warring factions with a view to exploring whether we could be of any assistance in bringing them to the negotiating table. Although initial reactions from all the sides were favourable, at a late stage one of the parties indicated that it was unable to attend.

In the light of all these developments, it is our opinion that the immediate goal, as clearly set out in the report of the Secretary-General, and as pursued by the United Nations Special Mission to Afghanistan, should be to convince the sides that military ascendancy by one over the others will not serve, in the long run, the interests of Afghan people. We strongly believe that there is no better way to achieve peace in Afghanistan than by initiating a healthy dialogue between the various factions.

One of the major obstacles to convincing the faction leaders that a military solution is not only undesirable but also unattainable is the continuing supply of weapons,

military equipment and ammunition from outside. As long as such foreign interference continues, the sides, and especially the Taliban, will see no incentive to desist from pursuing the military option.

In this respect, we all should realize that, under present conditions, not only are the well-being and humanitarian requirements of the Afghan people at stake, but, above all, its national unity. There exists a real and, in fact, a growing threat of division along ethnic lines. We should not lose sight of the fact that the developments in Afghanistan seriously threaten the stability and security of the region as a whole.

My country has close ties, deeply rooted in history, with Afghanistan and the Afghan people. We feel very strongly about the sovereignty, independence, territorial integrity and national unity of Afghanistan. For the unity of the country and for the benefit of the people of Afghanistan, the Afghan leaders should respond without delay to appeals of the friends of Afghanistan to cease the hostilities and to engage in negotiations for a peaceful solution.

We, the Member States of the United Nations, and especially those closest to Afghanistan, should try only to bring about a negotiated settlement of the Afghan problem. We should, in particular, strictly refrain from military involvement and interference in the internal affairs of Afghanistan.

For its part, Turkey is ready to do what it can to contribute to the normalization of the situation in that friendly country. We will wholeheartedly continue to support the Secretary-General's efforts to this end, as well as those of the United Nations Special Mission to Afghanistan. I would also like to remind the Council once again that, if and when the Secretary-General decides that an intra-Afghan meeting among the warring parties will contribute to peace efforts, Turkey stands ready to host such a meeting.

The President: The next speaker is the representative of Pakistan. I invite him to take a seat at the Council table and to make his statement.

Mr. Kamal (Pakistan): In accordance with your strict injunctions, Mr. President, I will refrain from congratulating you sincerely on the assumption of your high office, and from expressing my admiration for your predecessor, but you know, Sir, that such indeed are our deeply held sentiments.

My delegation has already outlined its reading of the underlying causes of the conflict in Afghanistan on a number of previous occasions in statements before the Council. I do not, therefore, intend to repeat those details, which set out the clear background to the situation that we are all faced with in that country and which remain as valid today as when we made those earlier statements.

What is clear to all of us is that we have a civil war in Afghanistan today. It is equally clear that the people of Afghanistan themselves, brave, noble, and peace-loving as they are, are fed up with the factional strife that has riven that country, and they earnestly dream of resuming a normal life in conditions of dignity and security.

It is incumbent upon all of us, observing Afghanistan from the outside as we do, to assist the people of Afghanistan in their quest for normalcy. This would require a comprehensive framework for restoring peace in Afghanistan, with the total commitment and support of the international community. This comprehensive framework should have political, economic and humanitarian components and should be implemented with vigour and determination.

Pakistan, for its part, is adhering to a policy of strict neutrality and non-interference in Afghanistan. We do not support a military solution, and we continue to believe that a broad-based government is the only viable solution for a multi-ethnic Afghanistan.

Pakistan has a deep vested interest in peace in Afghanistan. As a consequence of the continued instability in Afghanistan, there are more than 1.5 million refugees even today in Pakistan. We are facing great difficulties with the upkeep of these refugees in the face of donor fatigue and our own limited resources. We are also the victims of terrorism, drug trafficking and arms smuggling as a result of conditions inside Afghanistan. Our access to Central Asia, and the prospects of mutually beneficial economic collaboration with that region, have not materialized. No country in the world, therefore, has a deeper vested interest in peace in Afghanistan than does Pakistan.

Much has been said about the Taliban. The Taliban, who control Kabul and two thirds of Afghanistan, are a reality and cannot simply be wished away. Given the support that they undoubtedly have from the population in all the provinces that they control, it would be futile to indulge in name-calling, wishful thinking or military

confrontation. It would be far better obviously to engage them in constructive dialogue in an effort to get them to moderate some of their policies.

We have to take serious note of the fact that the Taliban have publicly proclaimed that they do not want to rule Afghanistan alone. They have expressed their willingness to include all ethnic groups in the formation of a government in Afghanistan. We do not hold any brief for them, but here is what we heard their representatives say during the recently concluded meeting of the Islamic summit in Islamabad:

> "The Taliban Islamic movement has been blamed differently. It is blamed as a movement started just for power for the Pashtun tribe, or it is said that this Government cannot represent the people of the Afghan nation. To deny the above-mentioned incorrect statements, we can say that this movement is neither a tribal nor a national movement, nor does it work for the advantage of a tribe or any foreign country. The movement does not allow others to interfere in Afghanistan. Similarly, it does not want to interfere in others' internal affairs. The Islamic State of Afghanistan is in favour of good relations with all countries of the world. To prove our claim of a broad-based Government in Afghanistan, we present a list of the Ministers and Governors belonging to Tajik and Uzbek tribes."

This was followed by a list of the four Tajik and Uzbek Ministers in the Ministries of Education, Refugees, and Planning in the central Government in Kabul and the three Governors of the Paktia, Parwan, and Kapisa provinces of Afghanistan. The statement of the Taliban went on to say:

> "Keeping in mind the above facts, we request all representatives of nations to convey these messages and ask the Governments to reopen their embassies in Kabul and let the Islamic State of Afghanistan represent the Afghan nation in the United Nations and in the Organization of the Islamic Conference".

Compare that effort at broad-based government to the statement made just two days ago by Commander Massoud to journalists, in which he, for his part, threatens to continue along the futile path of a military confrontation in the following words: "This year we have the intention of fighting on several fronts"; and again, "All our groups will begin fighting from several directions simultaneously".

Should the current polarization continue, or should it be encouraged from the outside, there is the danger of the fragmentation of Afghanistan along ethnic fault lines. This would have serious implications for the peace and stability of the entire region. It is therefore imperative that outside interference in support of one or the other of the contending factions cease. It is important for the international community to reiterate its total commitment to the unity and territorial integrity of Afghanistan.

There are continuing and disturbing reports of the provision of weapons and ammunition and the presence of foreign military personnel in Afghanistan. We have proposed on a number of occasions in the past that an arms embargo should be imposed on Afghanistan. We continue to believe that such an embargo would be helpful in containing the incentives for conflict. It would also have a psychological impact on the Afghans, influencing them to agree to an intra-Afghan dialogue with the aim of achieving a political settlement of the problem.

Pakistan recognizes the State of Afghanistan. We have done business with every regime in Kabul, regardless of whether it was that of Nur Mohammad Taraki, Hafizullah Amin, Mojadedi or Rabbani. We will continue to adhere to that policy.

It is important not only to be equitable, but also to be seen to be equitable towards the Afghan factions. The previous criterion for recognition of any of the factions as the legitimate Government of Afghanistan appears to have been control of Kabul. The Rabbani regime was accorded recognition when it controlled Kabul and six other provinces. Today, it has neither de facto control of the capital, as it holds sway over only three outlying provinces, nor any *de jure* legitimacy. Yet it continues to be tolerated as the Government of Afghanistan and continues to occupy Afghanistan's seat in the United Nations. This cannot be justified under any circumstances. The United Nations should adopt the "vacant seat" formula that was endorsed by the Organization of the Islamic Conference in its own meetings. That would reflect reality. More importantly, it would also encourage the factions to move towards a broad-based dispensation in order to secure full international legitimacy and recognition.

In the meantime, while Pakistan welcomes this open debate in the Security Council, it is convinced that we have not heard the true voice of the Afghan people, who alone can decide on their own future. Until and unless we do so, our discussions here will continue to be ill-informed and incomplete. It is high time that the Security Council listened to the views of the Taliban in order to have a more balanced view of the situation in Afghanistan. This could be done under the Arria formula. We understand that the Taliban have representatives in New York now. The sooner the Council engages them in dialogue, the better it will be for Afghanistan.

If the Security Council again takes a position that may be perceived to be one-sided, and if it does so without contacts with the Taliban or other Afghan factions, its judgement would once again fail to reflect the true sentiments of the Afghan people. The time has now come for the international community to take a more balanced and mature view of realities on the ground in Afghanistan. There are many indications that this is the time, not least of which is the constructive attitude that we have perceived on the part of some interested parties in recent contacts.

There is therefore an urgent need to facilitate an equitable settlement which takes cognizance of realities on the ground and the ethnic and demographic spread of the population. Any other solution that does not guarantee the equitable representation of all ethnic groups in a future dispensation will not bring durable peace to Afghanistan. Pakistan is committed to supporting the efforts of the United Nations Special Mission and of the Security Council in restoring peace in Afghanistan. We have some further suggestions as to how this could be done.

An intra-Afghan conference, under the aegis of the United Nations, assisted if necessary by the Organization of the Islamic Conference, with countries having contiguous borders with Afghanistan participating as observers, should be convened in order to find a lasting solution to and settlement of the Afghan problem. The agenda for such a meeting should comprise, first, an immediate ceasefire and the exchange of prisoners and dead bodies; secondly, the formation of a political commission, consisting of representatives from all the provinces, to decide on the future dispensation and the method of its appointment; and, thirdly, the creation of a national force, on the basis of proportionate representation from all the provinces, to collect heavy weapons and to provide security.

The outcome of such an intra-Afghan meeting could then be endorsed by an international conference. In this way the international community would not only be able to put its weight behind the decisions taken by the Afghans themselves, but could also promise assistance for the reconstruction of Afghanistan, if the Afghans honour their own decisions.

The other elements of a comprehensive approach require equal attention. We need a generous and sustained international commitment to the economic reconstruction of Afghanistan, and the provision of urgent humanitarian assistance to the people of Afghanistan. We also need such assistance for the refugees in Pakistan and Iran, and we need to make effective plans for their rapid repatriation to a peaceful Afghanistan.

The time has now come for the Security Council to act decisively for the cause of peace in Afghanistan. We hope that this debate will prove to be a new milestone in the international efforts towards building an international alliance for peace in Afghanistan. Let us act in accordance with the Charter of the United Nations. Let us use our resources, both material and moral, to overcome the apparent political impasse; and let us act now, before it is too late.

The President: I thank the representative of Pakistan for the kind words he addressed to me.

The next speaker is His Excellency Ambassador Engin Ansay, Permanent Observer of the Organization of the Islamic Conference to the United Nations, to whom the Council has extended an invitation under rule 39 of its provisional rules of procedure. I invite him to take a seat at the Council table and to make his statement.

Mr. Ansay (Organization of the Islamic Conference): On behalf of the Secretary General of the Organization of the Islamic Conference (OIC), and on my own behalf, I extend to you, Sir, our heartiest congratulations on your assumption of the high office of President of the Security Council. I also take this opportunity to pay tribute to your predecessor.

The Organization of the Islamic Conference is collaborating with the United Nations in promoting the ongoing peace process in Afghanistan. Throughout the civil war in that country, the OIC has focused unreservedly on endeavours to promote a cessation of hostilities so that the necessary climate for a credible

peace process, leading to the formulation of a broad-based representative Government, may be created. In our contacts with various Afghan leaders, especially during the OIC missions to the country, including those led by Ambassador Bakr after 1994, and the three that I led in the summer of 1995 and winter of 1996, we have consistently emphasized the futility of resorting to the use of force and seeking a military solution, instead of negotiation, in finding a common workable settlement to their present predicament. Mr. Norbert Holl, Head of the United Nations Special Mission to Afghanistan, with whom we have maintained close relations, has also advocated this view, and together we have endeavoured to defuse tensions and assist in fostering the spirit of mutual trust and confidence among the various Afghan factions so that a climate for peace may emerge.

In this context, I would like to refer to paragraph 15 of the Secretary-General's report (S/1997/240), which deals with the detention in Kabul of two French humanitarian workers. I am pleased to report that following the calls for their immediate release by the Secretary-General and the Security Council, the OIC secretariat promptly responded by using its good offices with the Taliban authorities, and with their cooperation arranged for the release and safe return of these French nationals.

The apparent overwhelming military successes of the Taliban over several of the areas previously held by the other Afghan factions have, indeed, sketched a different scenario of realities that face the country today. But if experience of other conflicts in that very region, as well as in other regions, is any guide, then there is a need, now more than ever before, for the cessation of hostilities and the serious resumption of the collective search for an honourable, workable and sustainable solution that would rescue the people of Afghanistan from the uncertainties and insecurities imposed on their lives by the devastating events of the past two decades. We fully share the Secretary-General's assertion in his report that no one should imagine that a military victory by one party over the others will resolve the Afghan problem in the long term.

While the prerogative of and the principal responsibilities for bringing peace to Afghanistan rests with the people — and especially the leadership, or leaderships of Afghanistan — other affected and interested countries in the region and elsewhere also have a role to contribute to the peace process. And it behoves those States that have influence over any particular political or military faction in Afghanistan to rise to the occasion and play a constructive role by preventing the sale and supply of arms to any of the factions in Afghanistan, by preventing the harbouring and training of militarists and by eliminating the devastating drug traffic, which has grown to an abominable volume and needs to be halted now before it reaches a catastrophic level.

As I said a moment ago, we in the OIC are endeavouring to complement the work of the United Nations to assist the diverse Afghan leadership to bring peace and tranquillity back to their country and to restore precious human rights, including those of women and children, which have been much trampled in the ensuing turmoil. To this end, the convening of a meeting of all Afghan factions that are active both inside and outside Afghanistan, including the monarchy, and other potentially influential leaders, such as General Abdul Haq, to explore and develop a commonly acceptable framework for addressing the country's political and security issues and a peaceful transfer of power, has been proposed and is being actively pursued. We in the OIC are certainly prepared to co-sponsor such a meeting, which may take place anywhere from Jeddah to Geneva, in Turkey or Germany; indeed, at any venue that is agreeable to all the Afghan participants. I hope that this approach will receive the support of the Security Council. The Secretary General of the OIC will soon visit New York, in response to the call of the Secretary-General, among other things, to consult on the advisability of such a meeting.

In conclusion, I would like to reiterate the OIC's full commitment to continue to play its role, constructive and complementary, to that of the United Nations, in facilitating the overall peace process in Afghanistan.

The President: I thank His Excellency Ambassador Engin Ansay for the kind words he addressed to me.

The next speaker is the representative of the Islamic Republic of Iran. I invite him to take a seat at the Council table and to make his statement.

Mr. Kharrazi (Islamic Republic of Iran): Allow me to congratulate you, Sir, on your assumption of the presidency of the Security Council for this month. I also wish to express appreciation to the Permanent Representative of Poland for his leadership of the Council in March.

Security Council consideration of the situation in Afghanistan is a welcome indication of the decision by the international community to focus further on this most

protracted and tragic conflict. This is all the more crucial at this time because military operations and further bloodshed are likely to intensify in the spring. The Islamic Republic of Iran hopes that the outcome of the deliberations of the issue in the Security Council will send a strong message to all warring parties in Afghanistan, stating in no uncertain terms that enough is enough and demanding that all Afghan parties cease immediately all armed hostilities, abandon and renounce the use of force and take advantage of the preparedness of the United Nations, the Organization of the Islamic Conference (OIC), regional States and other interested organizations and States to help them sort out their differences and engage in a political dialogue aimed at achieving national reconciliation and a durable political settlement of the conflict and establishing a broad-based and fully representative government.

The people of this war-ravaged country have suffered much for nearly 18 long years now. They have been subjected to horrors and indignities that are not fully comprehensible to the outside world. The Afghan people have been condemned to a life of misery, in which they are engaged in illicit traffic in arms and narcotics, and even in selling the bones and remains of their dead simply in order to support their families.

Such reflection on the grim and abhorrent reality in Afghanistan is by no means intended to be soft on or find justification for criminals and illicit traffickers in arms and narcotics, particularly those Afghan factions that reportedly organize and promote such illegal activities in order to finance their military operations. In fact, such illicit traffic in arms, and particularly in narcotic drugs, is a source of grave concern in Iran. It has greatly burdened the Islamic Republic of Iran in terms of both the manpower and the financial resources it devotes to combating drug traffic at its borders.

My intention, in reflecting on the human tragedy in Afghanistan, is to draw attention to the fact that in the final analysis it is not only the legal but also the moral responsibility of the international community to address this tragic situation in an effective manner.

As a neighbour of Afghanistan that has been directly and drastically affected by developments there and has shared with the Afghan people their agonizing experience and gone out of its way to provide humanitarian assistance to them, we strongly believe that the international community must use effectively both the carrot and the stick at its disposal in Afghanistan. While the Security Council should seek ways and means of seeing to it that its resolutions are implemented, the provision of humanitarian aid and preparatory work for the reconstruction of Afghanistan, and the incentives they offer for progress towards a political settlement, should be explored at the same time. Under such circumstances, there certainly is a greater chance of success for the efforts of the United Nations Special Mission to Afghanistan, the Organization of the Islamic Conference, regional States and other interested organizations and States to help bring this conflict to an end.

Owing to the tribal character of Afghanistan and other factors, including the socialization of poverty and violence over a long period of time, the political resolution of the Afghan conflict requires a comprehensive approach whereby the views of all parties and all segments of Afghan society are taken into account. To cite the report of the Secretary-General,

> "No one should imagine that a military victory by one party over the others will resolve the Afghan problem in the long term." *(S/1997/240, para. 23)*

In our view, coordination and cooperation on the part of the regional States which are the most directly affected by the situation in Afghanistan and other interested States with the United Nations Special Mission to Afghanistan is crucial to the international effort to find a lasting political settlement in that country. We welcome the decision of the Secretary-General to hold another meeting on Afghanistan of the interested States and organizations in order to coordinate regional and international efforts aimed at achieving national reconciliation in that country.

The United Nations Special Mission to Afghanistan should be supported and should be encouraged to further extend its contacts with all factions and groups in Afghanistan and with its neighbours. The efforts of the Special Mission to Afghanistan, headed by Mr. Norbert Holl, and of the Organization of the Islamic Conference to bring about the restoration of peace, normalcy and national reconciliation are to be commended. These efforts should continue with even greater vigour, resolve and impartiality in order to persuade all Afghan political factions and ethnic groups to denounce the logic and the use of force and to engage in a bona fide dialogue aimed at establishing a broad-based government of national unity.

In this connection, as the Islamic Republic of Iran was gravely concerned about the repercussions of the recent escalating developments in Afghanistan on the peace and stability of the region and on the Afghan reconciliation process, it convened an intra-Afghan meeting at Tehran on 25 and 26 January this year. In addition to Afghan groups, the Head of the United Nations Special Mission to Afghanistan and representatives of Pakistan, Turkey and Turkmenistan participated in the meeting. The Tehran meeting adopted a declaration that urged all Afghan parties to abandon hostilities in favour of constructive dialogue towards a political settlement.

In our view, a set of principles should guide all international, regional and other efforts aimed at achieving a just and lasting peace in Afghanistan. Such a list could include the following elements: respect for the sovereignty, political independence, territorial integrity and national unity of Afghanistan; the rejection of any military solution to the Afghan problem; the rejection of foreign intervention in the internal affairs of Afghanistan; refrainment from providing weapons, military personnel and advice to any and all warring factions in Afghanistan; respect for the fundamental rights and freedoms of all Afghan people, particularly the rights of women and girls; the need for a cessation of hostilities and for the beginning of national reconciliation through a process of dialogue in which all political and ethnic groups in Afghanistan will participate.

Bearing these principles in mind, the international community should redouble its efforts to begin the political process with a view to helping the Afghan people establish a broad-based government so as to halt further violence and bloodshed and ensure the durability and fairness of the solution. In this context, the idea of the demilitarization of Kabul as an important first step merits special attention. Needless to say, this requires careful planning and the negotiation of interim administrative measures to ensure security and public order.

The Islamic Republic of Iran is determined, within the framework of regional and international efforts and in cooperation and coordination with the United Nations Special Mission to Afghanistan, to continue to seek to impress upon all Afghan factions and ethnic groups the need to halt the vicious cycle of violence and the indignities the Afghan people have long been subjected to, and to resolve their differences by peaceful means through a process of political dialogue in which all Afghan factions and ethnic groups are represented.

The President: I thank the representative of the Islamic Republic of Iran for the kind words he addressed to me.

The next speaker is the representative of Germany. I invite him to take a seat at the Council table and to make his statement.

Mr. Rudolph (Germany): For the third time in just over a year, the Security Council is having an open debate on the situation in Afghanistan. The last 12 months have seen an increase in the activities of the international community, in particular the United Nations, to bring about a peaceful solution to the Afghan conflict. The last 12 months have not seen, regrettably, an increased willingness by the Afghan parties to put an end to the fighting. Outside support for the parties seems to have continued as well.

Germany fully supports what the representative of the Netherlands said on behalf of the European Union and very much shares the concerns expressed by many in the course of yesterday's and today's open debate. With the snows melting, new and large battles may be just around the corner. The political consequences could be serious, the humanitarian impact disastrous. According to the Secretary-General's recent report, the rather limited fighting within the first two and a half months this year led to the displacement of 115,000 people from north of Kabul alone. We strongly support the request made by the United Nations to the Taliban authorities to take measures to encourage the return of the displaced to their home communities.

We remain deeply concerned about the human rights situation in Afghanistan. In resolution 1076 (1996), adopted on 22 October 1996, the Security Council denounced the discrimination against girls and women and other violations of human rights and international humanitarian law in Afghanistan. The General Assembly repeated this denunciation in its resolution 51/195, adopted by consensus on 17 December 1996, and called upon all Afghan parties to respect the human rights of every individual, regardless of gender, ethnicity and religion. In spite of these very clear expressions of the will of the international community, human rights continue to be largely violated in Afghanistan. In this respect, policies of the Taliban denying girls and women access to education and to many forms of employment are particularly disturbing. It is clear that the international standing of any Afghan party cannot be independent of its record in complying with international

obligations and the unanimous decisions of United Nations bodies.

My Government fully supports the untiring efforts of the United Nations, in particular the United Nations Special Mission to Afghanistan, that aim at exploring every possibility to bring the Afghan conflict closer to its peaceful solution. Since the open Security Council debate on Afghanistan on 9 April 1996, the United Nations Special Mission has been strengthened by the secondment of political affairs officers. Norbert Holl was appointed as its new Head. In December 1996, the General Assembly renewed the mandate of the Special Mission and further strengthened it by allowing for the deployment of three additional military advisers and two civilian police advisers.

The principles for peace in Afghanistan, as laid down in General Assembly resolution 50/88, were reaffirmed in several Security Council decisions, including resolution 1076 (1996), and updated and further elaborated in General Assembly resolution 51/195. We have said again and again that what remains to be done is to put these principles for peace into practice. So far, the parties have decided to continue fighting. But Norbert Holl and his dedicated staff have been successful in keeping channels open, to the extent where, as experience has shown, the Special Mission is currently the only institution that can bring together all parties for talks. So long as we do not want to give up hope that we may see the Afghan conflict solved peacefully, the task of the Special Mission will remain of crucial importance.

What can be done to convince the Afghan parties to renounce the military option and commit themselves to a peace process? There may be no easy answer to that question. But it is clear that it is the United Nations that must try to bring the parties to the negotiating table, and that the United Nations will need help from its Member States in doing so. Security Council resolution 1076 (1996) as well as General Assembly resolution 51/195 assign the central role in international efforts aiming at a peaceful resolution of the Afghan conflict to the United Nations. At the same time, both decisions call on Member States actively to support the work of the United Nations and to use any influence they have with the Afghan parties to that end.

We would therefore encourage the Secretary-General and the Special Mission to intensify their contacts with regional and other interested States on the issue of Afghanistan. The international meeting on Afghanistan planned for 16 April can be an important step in that direction. We also call upon all concerned to coordinate closely with the Special Mission all initiatives they plan with regard to Afghanistan. Any peace talks involving the Afghan parties should be chaired by the United Nations.

It has been repeated often that the Afghan conflict must be solved through negotiations and not on the battlefield. Peace in Afghanistan requires a joint effort by all of us, under the leadership of the United Nations. We must translate our strict rejection of a military solution into full support, in words and deeds, for the United Nations Special Mission. Germany stands ready to play its part, and we look forward to continued cooperation with the United Nations and with other interested Member States in pursuing our common goal of a peaceful Afghanistan.

The President: The next speaker is the representative of Italy. I invite him to take a seat at the Council table and to make his statement.

Mr. Terzi di Sant'Agata (Italy): The Italian delegation fully endorses the statement made by the Netherlands on behalf of the European Union, and would like to add some comments on particular aspects of this issue.

Afghanistan is a country that in its long history has been afflicted by recurring tensions, heightened at times by the interference of foreign countries. But this interference has always been repelled by the deeply independent character of the Afghan people. This is both ancient and modern history. Events of the past 15 years have left Afghanistan torn asunder by clashes between the various factions and prey to a civil war to which no end is in sight. Sadly, all available indications point to a probable resumption of hostilities in the coming days and weeks, with the arrival of spring making the mountain passes that dot the countryside once again viable. But if there is a lesson that can be learned from recent history, it is that a lasting solution to the Afghan crisis cannot be found on the military level but must instead be the fruit of a consultation process and of political mediation, not only between the main faction leaders, but also among the various components of Afghan society.

For many years the neighbouring countries have born the burden of millions of Afghan refugees in their territories, at a high cost. The number of refugees has gone down recently but still poses considerable problems for the host countries. We must appreciate the efforts

made by these countries and be grateful for the welcome they have extended to the refugees. These countries are indeed the most interested in finding a stable and lasting solution to the Afghan crisis, as a political settlement would also allow the return of the refugees to their homes.

In recent months the Taliban movement has gained control over an ever wider swath of the country, including the capital. The decisions made thus far by the Taliban leaders in Kabul have certainly been cause for alarm in the international community, especially in terms of respect for the human rights of women. It is worthwhile to repeat forcefully that these rights are the common heritage of all humanity, and must always be respected. We also note that the international community knows very little about the structure of that movement, and can only base its judgment on the decisions and behaviour that have raised such alarm.

Italy fully supports the mediation activities of the United Nations Special Mission to Afghanistan, and is also convinced that close coordination between all the negotiating efforts is needed. We hope that these initiatives can bring about significant improvements and register concrete results. In this perspective we believe that the Secretary-General's useful initiative to convene a new meeting on Afghanistan of the countries most directly interested in the Afghan crisis can help lead to innovative proposals and to indications of ways to find a solution to the crisis.

In view of its traditional friendly relations with Afghanistan, Italy has continued over these years to provide an uninterrupted flow of humanitarian assistance to the country through contributions to the specialized agencies and other United Nations structures. We look forward to the conference on coordinating humanitarian assistance activities to be held in Geneva on 21 April. It is of the utmost importance that this coordination be implemented in a way that allows the assistance to be equitably distributed to the entire Afghan population.

Italy is particularly concerned by the growing dimensions of drug production in Afghanistan. This is not a new phenomenon, but the disintegration of any semblance of central power and the economic ruin of the country have led larger segments of the population to undertake this harmful activity. The action that the factions take to cut back on the cultivation of drug crops is a litmus test of their will to participate constructively in the rebuilding of a new State that is fully entitled to be part of the international community.

In closing, let me reiterate Italy's determination to participate in the search for a compromise solution that will allow a gradual stabilization of the country, a greater flow of humanitarian assistance, and a much-needed improvement in the living conditions of the people.

The President: The next speaker is the representative of Tajikistan. I invite him to take a seat at the Council table and to make his statement.

Mr. Alimov (Tajikistan) (*interpretation from Russian*): The ongoing armed conflict in Afghanistan, the danger of its further escalation and the attempts by the Taliban movement to settle the question of who shall rule the country to its own advantage by exclusively military means are the cause of growing concern to Tajikistan and the rest of the international community. We are particularly concerned that the civilian population is suffering as a result of hostilities. There is a growing number of refugees and internally displaced persons, including citizens of Tajikistan who by chance found themselves in the Islamic State of Afghanistan at that time.

Available information suggests that in the territory controlled by the Taliban there are gross violations of basic human rights, particularly those of women. There is also abundant evidence that people are being persecuted on political and ethnic grounds and that religious fanaticism is being propagated. There have been gross violations of the norms of international law, and actions that prevent the normal performance of United Nations activities in Afghanistan. We believe that all this calls for the firmest possible reaction by the international community.

We cannot fail to be alarmed by information that the warring parties are continuing to build up their forces and are preparing for active hostilities which may very soon take on even more devastating proportions, seriously complicating and exacerbating the already critical humanitarian situation in the country. At the same time, it appears to us that there is a concomitant growing threat to regional peace and security.

Assurances that the conflict in Afghanistan is a purely internal matter seem to us to be extremely dubious. Tajikistan is giving ever-closer consideration to the possible consequences of a continuation of hostilities in fraternal Afghanistan, which is our neighbour. We have already encountered some real problems, foremost

among them the growing illegal trafficking in drugs, weapons and munitions.

In this connection, we have been making concerted efforts — together with the Russian Federation, Kazakstan, Kyrgyzstan and Uzbekistan, and both in the framework of the Almaty meeting and on a bilateral basis — to neutralize the negative impact of the ongoing intra-Afghan conflict and to secure the common interests shared by our countries in the region. This was one of the topics discussed at the consultative meeting of the Ministers for Foreign Affairs of Central Asia and the Russian Federation, held on 5 April 1997 in Dushanbe. In their joint declaration, the participants in that meeting reaffirmed the readiness of their countries to continue to cooperate closely to ensure the security of the southern borders of the Commonwealth of Independent States, particularly in the Tajik-Afghan sector of the common border. They also called upon concerned countries to promote actively a political settlement of the Afghan problem.

Tajikistan, which strictly pursues a policy of non-interference in the internal affairs of the neighbouring Islamic State of Afghanistan, and which acknowledges the right of the Afghan people to choose whatever political system they see fit, believes that the warring parties should put an immediate end to hostilities and should start to explore ways and means of achieving agreement in order to restore peace in the country. At the same time, the legitimate interests of all ethnic and religious groups and regions must be taken into account. In this connection, we cannot fail to be alarmed by the fact that the Taliban movement, under various pretexts, is frustrating all attempts to begin an intra-Afghan dialogue at a responsible level and has also rejected every invitation to sit down at the negotiating table, whether from individual States or from the United Nations Special Mission to Afghanistan.

Tajikistan wholeheartedly supports the efforts of the United Nations Special Mission to Afghanistan, headed by Mr. Holl, and is prepared to give it every assistance. We believe that the United Nations and its Member States must intensify their efforts to resolve the Afghan problem before the situation gets even worse. We share the Secretary-General's view that we must all ensure that our actions are coordinated in order to step up international pressure on the Afghan sides and to induce them to resolve the conflict through peaceful means. It is quite clear that no single Afghan military-political faction should impose its will on the others.

We also believe that United Nations resolutions and decisions on Afghanistan provide an excellent basis for exploring ways and means to resolve the conflict. What we need now is for all these resolutions to be implemented strictly. This means, first and foremost, that there should be no outside interference in the internal affairs of Afghanistan and that an end should be put to the supply of weapons and the provision of any military or logistical assistance to the warring factions. We also expect that the forthcoming second meeting of concerned countries on Afghanistan will help achieve consensus on how to approach an Afghan settlement and will suggest additional ways and means to strengthen the peacekeeping efforts of the United Nations.

The President: I shall now make a statement in my capacity as the representative of Portugal.

The Presidency of the European Union has already stated the common views of its member States on Afghanistan. Therefore, I will emphasize only certain elements of my country's position with regard the situation in that country.

As the fighting continues, we urge the parties to halt hostilities. A ceasefire should be the first step, to enable them to begin real negotiations aimed at a political settlement. Only in that way will the territorial integrity of Afghanistan be maintained and will the Afghan people be able to enjoy peace as an independent and sovereign country.

Yet this may not be at hand, as one of the parties seems to be convinced that it is in a position to take over the whole country militarily. But the past 18 years of war in Afghanistan lead us to believe that a military victory by one of the warring parties will not bring an end to the fighting. The United Nations must help to break this cycle and induce the parties to move forward towards a political settlement. The Security Council must send a precise, concise and clear message in support of the United Nations Special Mission to Afghanistan. We must make sure that the parties and their external backers get this message.

This open meeting of the Council is instrumental in sending the international community's message that the United Nations is committed to a settlement in Afghanistan. With that purpose, the Council fully backs the efforts of the Organization's main instrument in Afghanistan, the United Nations Special Mission. The United Nations Special Mission to Afghanistan plays a

central role in that process and all United Nations Members must cooperate with it, by coordinating any initiatives regarding Afghanistan with the Head of the Mission, Mr. Norbert Holl.

For too long, Afghanistan has been subject to interference from outside, which has only served to prolong the conflict. Like others, we call for an end to such interference and an end to the supply of arms and ammunition to the factions, which continues despite the denials of those involved. I would like to recall that following the adoption of Security Council resolution 1076 (1996), the European Union decided to impose an arms embargo on Afghanistan. We urge others to follow the same pattern.

Two other extremely worrying features of the Afghan conflict continue: drug trafficking and the existence of terrorist training camps. These two factors not only help fuel the conflict but also constitute a serious threat to peace and security in the whole region. We urge the parties to put an end to these intolerable destabilizing practices.

Every new day of war in Afghanistan brings misery and suffering to the civilian population. And every day that Afghanistan remains without a broad-based interim Government and an effective civilian administration, the country is pushed further backwards on the scale of economic and human development. In the humanitarian field, the fighting has caused heavy casualties and has forced thousands of civilians to flee their homes and many more to flee the country. We, too, call on all factions to cooperate with the delivery of humanitarian aid to all the people of Afghanistan, irrespective of their ethnic group, race or gender. Portugal expresses its deep concern about the widespread violations of fundamental human rights in Afghanistan, in particular the intolerable measures imposed by the Taliban affecting the rights of girls and women.

The Security Council must make it known to all the factions that they are responsible not only for complying with humanitarian law, but also for respecting and implementing international human rights standards with regard to each and every citizen in Afghanistan.

The United Nations stands ready to assist the parties in reaching peace and national reconciliation. But the parties bear the primary responsibility in this task.

Those countries which have been channelling humanitarian assistance to Afghanistan would certainly prefer to divert resources to the huge reconstruction needs of the country. But the Afghan parties should be made aware that this will not happen until peace is achieved.

I now resume my function as President of the Council.

The Acting Minister for Foreign Affairs of Afghanistan has asked to speak. I now call on him.

Mr. Ghafoorzai (Afghanistan): At the outset, I would like to sincerely thank, in the name of the Afghan nation, all those who have participated during these last two days in the debate on Afghanistan. On behalf of tormented Afghan women, I would especially like to thank all those countries that took a strong stance in defence of the God-given rights of women in Afghanistan against the brutal, un-Islamic, uncivilized behaviour and deeds of the Taliban, in violation of basic human rights, basic principles of democracy and basic principles of the United Nations Charter to which we are all committed.

We have heard the appeals made in the debate by members of the Security Council and other members of the United Nations to all of the Afghan conflicting sides to choose negotiations instead of conflict and war. As far as the Islamic State of Afghanistan is concerned, I can assure all Council members that these appeals will be communicated and will be heard. As far as we are concerned, we have adopted a policy of respecting both General Assembly and Security Council resolutions. We have expressed our readiness to support Mr. Holl's Mission. We have also expressed our support for any negotiated political settlement, at any venue, on any platform.

It has been, and continues to be, the Taliban who have adopted an intransigent attitude towards the United Nations. This reality is reflected in the records of the General Assembly and of the Security Council.

We also heard a statement today by Ambassador Kamal of Pakistan. We were not caught by surprise, but we were somewhat disappointed, because the Prime Minister of Pakistan had promised that he would reconsider the policy of the new Pakistani Government with regard to the issue of Afghanistan. However, the statement made by the Ambassador of Pakistan was the only one with a totally different tone and spirit, when we compare it with the statements made by all representatives who took part in the debate.

Security Council members may recall that at one of the consultation meetings of the Council, it was reported that the former Minister of the Interior of Pakistan, Mr. Naseerullah Babar, had stated in a meeting in Mazar-i-Sharif that he had power of attorney from the Taliban. The Council members were surprised to hear that; yet it was once again repeated by the representative of the Secretariat that this is exactly what the former Minister of the Interior of Pakistan had said.

Upon hearing the Pakistani Ambassador's statement, it became somewhat clear that the Government of Pakistan is still trying to lend some kind of legitimacy to the Taliban mercenaries. When we say mercenaries, I think we have adequate reasons to justify describing the Taliban as a mercenary group. We have presented and submitted more than adequate documentation that they are being trained, financed, armed and equipped in Pakistani territory, in Quetta, and then they are being sent into Afghanistan for operations.

The Ambassador of Pakistan made some suggestions. First of all, he was of the opinion that the Taliban are not the kind of power to be washed away easily. We have never advocated that the Taliban should not be heard, that they should not have any role in shaping the future political situation of Afghanistan. It is the Taliban who have continuously rejected any proposal for dialogue and negotiations.

By inviting the New York-based Taliban representative, the Ambassador of Pakistan even approached the point of giving the exact location and address of the Taliban office in New York. It was somewhat surprising. He was inviting the New York Taliban under the Arria formula.

That would constitute a recognition that the current contacts between Mr. Holl and the Taliban are useless and inadequate. Moreover, I wonder whether there is any need for the Taliban to have a voice in the United Nations as long as they enjoy the presence of a loyal representative here.

For the Council to listen to the Taliban under the Arria formula would basically run counter to the resolutions of the General Assembly with regard to mercenaries, especially those who are used against the right to self-determination of peoples throughout the world. That would definitely establish a dangerous precedent.

The Ambassador of Pakistan said that he would prefer the "vacant seat" formula to be used for Afghanistan, and he referred to a decision of the Organization of the Islamic Conference. I was not clear about the decision to which he referred, because the Islamic State of Afghanistan continues to represent Afghanistan at the Organization of the Islamic Conference. There have been many gatherings and meetings, the last as recently as three weeks ago. The representative of the Islamic State of Afghanistan represented Afghanistan at the meeting of the Organization of the Islamic Conference, that was held, at ambassadorial level, in New York.

What happened in Islamabad? I think that the presence of some esteemed leaders of Islamic countries at the commemoration of the fiftieth anniversary of the creation of Pakistan was used by the host country for political gain, in favour of the Taliban. The Ambassador of Pakistan also referred to the statement made by Commander Massoud, in which he indicated his resoluteness to continue to fight on in various battles against the Taliban. Yes, he said that; he made that statement. As long as the Taliban continue to reject any proposal for dialogue and political settlement, Commander Massoud and the other members of the Supreme Council for the Defence of Afghanistan have no option but to continue to defend the territorial integrity, national unity and sovereignty of Afghanistan.

In brief, I would like to put on the record of the Security Council the fact that tolerance of the Taliban and their supporters would mean tolerance of human rights violations; justification of obscurantism; opposition to the principles of democracy; rejectionism; and a continued intransigent attitude towards the resolutions of the General Assembly and the Security Council.

The President: The representative of Pakistan has asked to speak. I invite him to take a seat at the Council table and to make his statement.

Mr. Kamal (Pakistan): I do not intend to respond to the statement that we have just heard, coming as it does from a person who has neither de facto control, nor *de jure* legitimacy within his own country. But it is, unfortunately, full of inaccuracies, which may, somehow, lead the Security Council to base its own decisions on false information. It is that information which needs to be put correctly on the record.

I made the statement that the Organization of the Islamic Conference had decided to follow a "vacant seat" approach with regard to Afghanistan. That formula was used in the Jakarta meeting of the Organization of the Islamic Conference, and in the Islamabad meeting. Those were not ambassadorial-level meetings; they were at the ministerial level and above. It was at that level that the Organization of the Islamic Conference decided not to have anybody sitting in the Afghanistan seat at its meetings.

A statement was made about Pakistan's involvement in Afghanistan. We have said repeatedly that we have no favourites in Afghanistan. We are convinced that the Afghans themselves will be able to find peace and security in their country only through a broad-based dispensation. We know that those in this Chamber who claim to represent Afghanistan do not have *de jure* legitimacy. They were chosen as the result of a particular formula evolved in Islamabad by which they were given eight months, no more, to organize elections only. They did not do it. At the end of the eight months — minority Government that they were — they tried to hold on to their seats, thinking that they could overrun the whole of Afghanistan. That was a moral denial of the commitment that they had given to their own Afghan colleagues.

It is their insistence on trying to run matters alone — as a minority which, as is generally known, has the backing of no more than 15 per cent of the population — that has led to the situation in which Afghanistan finds itself today. Pakistan is a neighbouring country of Afghanistan and I agree with all the representatives of other neighbouring countries who have spoken today and have expressed fear about the fallout from the situation, the root cause of which is the insistence of this particular Rabbani regime on holding on to power, and its failure to honour commitments solemnly made to colleagues and in the holiest of holies of the Muslim world.

It is not in anger that I speak, because I cannot be angry with people who have no legitimacy. But pain can be caused even by a mosquito bite, and it is that pain to which I am responding. We are here in the Security Council to try to help find a solution to the problem of Afghanistan. It is not an easy situation. We are faced with a country that is ethnically divided. The formula with which we, as outsiders, have tried to come forward, is that the country requires a broad-based government. The United Nations has subscribed to that formula. It is fundamental to the United Nations Special Mission to Afghanistan. That is the formula on which we need to go forward. In order to proceed on the basis of that formula, it is essential for this body to hear all the representatives of the Afghan people. It cannot decide in isolation. That was the point that we made: it is incumbent upon the Security Council, if it wants to find a logical and legal solution that will be durable in Afghanistan, to base such a solution on hearing the Afghan people across the board, by any formula that may be deemed fit — inside this Chamber, or outside it if necessary. The parties must be heard; they must be heard before conclusions are reached. The facile argument has been made that to hear them would mean bypassing the special representative. So why are we sitting here for this debate? We do not need it: the special representative is good enough. We all have respect for Mr. Norbert Holl.

But we are meeting here today so that we can exchange views. And those views have to be based on dialogue and a willingness to listen to all before deciding. I do hope that the Security Council will prove itself to be up to that task of listening to all the representatives of the Afghan people by whatever formula it deems fit.

The President: The Acting Minister for Foreign Affairs of Afghanistan has asked to speak again, but I have to seek the opinion of the members of the Council before granting this request.

Mr. Cabral (Guinea-Bissau) (*interpretation from French*): We have great respect for the delegations represented here and great consideration for the positions they express here.

I do not think it would serve the purpose we are trying to achieve here to allow our Afghan friends and our colleague from Pakistan to engage in an exchange of views that could only exacerbate the debate and could divert us from the task we have set ourselves here: working towards peace in Afghanistan through dialogue. Let me therefore appeal to the Acting Minister for Foreign Affairs of Afghanistan and to my colleague Mr. Kamal to give up their debate, however, useful it may be, so that we can find our way by using the points we have already heard, which seem sufficiently clear for us to fashion the elements to be contained in the draft statement we intend to submit to the members of the Council for approval.

The President (*interpretation from French*): With your agreement, Mr. Minister, we shall continue.

(spoke in English)

There are no further speakers. The resumption of this meeting to continue the consideration of the item on the agenda will be fixed in consultation with the members of the Council.

The meeting was suspended at 5.55 p.m.

United Nations S/PV.3765 (Resumption 2)

Security Council

Fifty-second Year

Provisional

3765th Meeting

Wednesday, 16 April 1997, 10 a.m.
New York

President:	Mr. Monteiro	(Portugal)
Members:	Chile	Mr. Searle
	China	Mr. Wang Xuexian
	Costa Rica	Mr. Sáenz Biolley
	Egypt	Mr. Elaraby
	France	Mr. Thiebaud
	Guinea-Bissau	Mr. Da Gama
	Japan	Mr. Owada
	Kenya	Mr. Mahugu
	Poland	Mr. Matuszewski
	Republic of Korea	Mr. Choi
	Russian Federation	Mr. Fedotov
	Sweden	Mr. Lidén
	United Kingdom of Great Britain and Northern Ireland	Sir John Weston
	United States of America	Mr. Inderfurth

Agenda

The situation in Afghanistan

97-85402 (E)

This record contains the original text of speeches delivered in English and interpretations of speeches delivered in the other languages. The final text will be printed in the *Official Records of the Security Council*. Corrections should be submitted to original speeches only. They should be incorporated in a copy of the record and be sent under the signature of a member of the delegation concerned,

The meeting was resumed and adjourned on Wednesday, 16 April 1997, at 10.25 a.m.

United Nations S/PV.3766

Security Council

Fifty-second Year

Provisional

3766th Meeting

Wednesday, 16 April 1997, 10.25 a.m.

New York

President:	Mr. Monteiro	(Portugal)
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	Russian Federation	Mr. Fedotov
	Sweden	Mr. Lidén
	United Kingdom of Great Britain and Northern Ireland	Sir John Weston
	United States of America	Mr. Inderfurth

Agenda

The situation in Afghanistan

97-85389 (E)

This record contains the original text of speeches delivered in English and interpretations of speeches delivered in the other languages. The final text will be printed in the *Official Records of the Security Council*. Corrections should be submitted to original speeches only. They should be incorporated in a copy of the record and be sent under the signature of a member of the delegation concerned, *within one week of the date of publication*, to the Chief of the Verbatim Reporting Service, room C-178.

The meeting was called to order at 10.25 a.m.

Adoption of the agenda

The agenda was adopted.

The situation in Afghanistan

The President: The Security Council will now resume its consideration of the item on its agenda.

Following consultations among members of the Security Council, I have been authorized to make the following statement on behalf of the Council:

"The Security Council has considered the report of the Secretary-General concerning the situation in Afghanistan of 16 March 1997 (S/1997/240). It has also considered the views expressed at its 3765th meeting on 14-15 April 1997 on the subject.

"The Security Council expresses its grave concern at the continued fighting in Afghanistan and its intensification in recent months. It reiterates that the continuation of the conflict threatens to destabilize the region and prevents steps towards the formation of a fully representative and broad-based government able to address effectively Afghanistan's acute social and economic problems.

"The Security Council calls upon the Afghan parties to cease immediately all hostile actions and to enter into sustained negotiations. The Council strongly believes that a negotiated settlement is the only solution to the long-standing conflict in this country.

"The Security Council fully supports the United Nations efforts to facilitate national reconciliation in Afghanistan. It is convinced that the United Nations must continue to play the central role in assisting the warring Afghan factions to engage in a fully fledged negotiating process on the basis of Security Council resolution 1076 (1996) and General Assembly resolution 51/195. The Council welcomes the activities of the United Nations Special Mission in Afghanistan (UNSMA) and supports further efforts by the Secretary-General to give a new impetus to its work. In this context it welcomes the holding by UNSMA of intra-Afghan working group meetings in Islamabad but regrets that these efforts have not yet achieved positive results.

"The Security Council deeply regrets that many important provisions of Security Council resolution 1076 (1996) and General Assembly resolution 51/195 remain unimplemented. It calls upon all Afghan parties, in particular the Taliban, to abide by these resolutions, to cooperate fully with UNSMA and to participate in serious and honest negotiations through the good offices of the Special Mission. The Council urges interested countries to coordinate their activities with those of UNSMA and to refrain from supporting one Afghan party against another.

"The Security Council welcomes the convening by the Secretary-General of a meeting of concerned countries on 16 April 1997, following the earlier meeting held in New York on 18 November 1996.

"The Security Council takes note of the intention of the Secretary-General to consult the Afghan parties and all those concerned on the advisability of an intra-Afghan meeting at some stage and requests him to put forward a concrete plan if and when he decides that it will contribute to the peace process.

"The Security Council again calls upon all States to end immediately the supply of arms and ammunition to all parties to the conflict in Afghanistan.

"The Security Council reiterates its concern that the continuation of the conflict in Afghanistan provides a fertile ground for terrorism and drug trafficking which destabilize the region and beyond, and calls upon the leaders of the Afghan parties to halt such activities.

"The Security Council is deeply concerned at the worsening of the humanitarian situation including the displacement of the civilian population. It is also deeply concerned at the discrimination against women and other violations of human rights and of international humanitarian law in Afghanistan. The Council deplores the mistreatment of personnel of international humanitarian organizations, which inhibits the international community's ability to respond to Afghanistan's pressing humanitarian needs.

"The Security Council welcomes the convening of an International Forum on Assistance to Afghanistan on 21-22 January 1997 at Ashgabat and the forthcoming meeting of the Afghanistan Support Group on 21 April 1997 in Geneva. It encourages all States and international organizations to continue to extend all possible humanitarian assistance which should be distributed equitably throughout the country.

"The Security Council will remain seized of the matter and requests the Secretary-General to continue to keep it regularly informed of the situation in Afghanistan."

This statement will be issued as a document of the Security Council under the symbol S/PRST/1997/20.

The Security Council has thus concluded the present stage of its consideration of the item on its agenda.

The meeting rose at 10.30 a.m.